

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO  
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Risk to Resilience: Exploring Protective Factors for Students Experiencing Homelessness  
at a Traditional High School and a Modified Comprehensive School

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

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2013

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

California State University San Marcos

2013

## DEDICATION

To my wife Cathy. Thank you for all you sacrificed and for the unwavering support. This dream is real because of you.

To my children, Ella, Ryan and Olivia. I am looking forward to making up for my absence. May this family endeavor inspire you.

Para mis padres, Joel y Maria Garcia. Desde que era niño, me han inculcado el valor de la educación. Gracias.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE .....	iii
DEDICATION .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	xii
VITA.....	xiii
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework .....	2
1.1.1 Risks.....	3
1.1.2 Resilience.....	4
1.1.3 School Structures .....	5
1.1.4 School Culture .....	5
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Research Questions.....	7
1.4 Methods.....	9
1.5 Significance .....	11
1.6 Key Terms.....	11
1.7 Organization of the Dissertation .....	13
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	14
2.1 Risks Related to Homelessness .....	14
2.1.1 Health .....	15
2.1.2 Academic Achievement.....	18
2.1.3 Family Breakdown .....	21
2.1.4 Social Emotional Well-Being.....	22
2.2 Resilience.....	26
2.2.1 Resilience and Homeless Youth .....	29
2.2.2 Resilience-Promoting School Programs .....	30

2.3 School Institutional Structures .....	33
2.3.1 Student Support .....	34
2.3.1.1 Counseling .....	34
2.3.1.2 Mentor Programs .....	35
2.3.1.3 College Transition.....	35
2.3.1.4 Vocational Training .....	36
2.3.1.5 Homework Support.....	36
2.3.1.6 Extracurricular Activities.....	36
2.3.1.7 Community Service .....	37
2.3.2 Curriculum and Instruction.....	38
2.3.3 Staff Awareness and Development.....	40
2.4 School Culture and Climate .....	41
2.4.1 Safety .....	42
2.4.2 Staff Attitudes .....	42
2.4.3 Classroom and School Participation .....	43
2.4.4 Adult and Peer Relationships.....	44
2.5 Summary.....	45
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	49
3.1 Case Study Methodology.....	49
3.2 Sample and Population .....	52
3.2.1 Site Selection .....	53
3.2.2 Participant Selection .....	55
3.2.2.1 Youth.....	55
3.2.2.2 Adults.....	56
3.3 Data Collection .....	57
3.3.1 Methods.....	57
3.3.1.1 Observations .....	58
3.3.1.2 Interviews.....	58
3.3.1.3 Document Analysis.....	59
3.4 Data Analysis.....	59

3.5 Limitations .....	60
3.5.1 Generalizability .....	60
3.5.2 Positionality .....	61
3.6 Summary .....	62
CHAPTER FOUR: CITY HIGH SCHOOL .....	62
4.1 Student Experiences with Homelessness .....	62
4.2 School Institutional Structures .....	65
4.2.1 School Size.....	65
4.2.2 Curriculum and Instruction .....	66
4.2.3 Different Schools, Different Rules .....	67
4.2.4 Goals for Students.....	68
4.2.5 Student Support.....	69
4.2.5.1 Basic Needs.....	70
4.2.5.2 Academic Support and Interventions.....	70
4.2.5.3 Emotional Support .....	71
4.2.5.4 Social Expectations and Support .....	75
4.2.5.5 Post High School Planning .....	76
4.2.5.6 Extracurricular Activities.....	77
4.2.5.7 Differential Access to Academic Supports. ....	79
4.2.6 District Support for Homeless Students.....	80
4.2.7 Staff Awareness and Development.....	80
4.3 School Culture and Climate .....	82
4.3.1 Safety .....	83
4.3.2 Student Attitudes Toward School .....	84
4.3.3 Student Perceptions About Educators.....	85
4.3.4 Academic Expectations.....	88
4.3.5 Student-Adult Relationships .....	89
4.3.6 Peer Relationships.....	91
4.3.7 Structural Changes and the Effect on School Culture .....	91
4.4 Summary.....	93

CHAPTER FIVE: BAYVIEW SCHOOL .....	94
5.1 Student Experiences with Homelessness .....	94
5.2 School Institutional Structures .....	96
5.2.1 School Size.....	97
5.2.2 Curriculum and Instruction.....	97
5.2.3 Goals for Students.....	100
5.2.4 Student Support.....	102
5.2.4.1 Academic Support and Interventions.....	103
5.2.4.2 Emotional Support .....	104
5.2.4.3 Social Support.....	106
5.2.4.4 Post High School .....	111
5.2.4.5 Extracurricular Activities.....	113
5.2.4.6 Parent Support.....	114
5.2.5 Staff Awareness and Development.....	115
5.3 School Culture and Climate .....	116
5.3.1 A Climate of Safety and Trust .....	116
5.3.2 Student and Educator Attitudes About the School Experience ...	120
5.3.3 Caring Relationships and the Support They Offer.....	126
5.4 Summary.....	129
CHAPTER SIX: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS.....	131
6.1 Research Question One: Protective Factors at City High School and Bayview School .....	132
6.1.1 Sub-question one: Institutional Structures Impacting the Protective Factors.....	137
6.1.2 Sub-questions two: School’s Culture and Climate Impacting the Protective Factors.....	149
6.2 Summary.....	142
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION.....	144
7.1 Summary of the Dissertation .....	144
7.1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	144

7.1.2 Purpose and Research Questions .....	145
7.1.3 Review of Methodology .....	146
7.1.4 Overview of Significant Findings .....	147
7.2 Recommendations for Future Research .....	149
7.3 Implications for Professional Practice .....	150
APPENDICES .....	156
Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Study (Bayview School Student) .....	156
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in Study (City High School Student) .....	157
Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Study (Bayview School Educator) .....	168
Appendix D: Invitation to Participate in Study (City High School Educator) .....	169
Appendix E: Parent Informed Consent Form- Focus Group Interviews .....	160
Appendix F: Parent Informed Consent Form-Individual Student Interviews .....	162
Appendix G: High School Student Assent Form .....	164
Appendix H: Bayview School Educator Informed Consent .....	165
Appendix I: City High School Educator Informed Consent .....	167
Appendix J: Student Interview Protocol .....	169
Appendix K: Educator Interview Protocol .....	171
Appendix L: School Observation Protocol .....	173
Appendix M: Document Analysis Protocol .....	174
REFERENCES .....	175

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Student Population at Research Sites: .....	54
Table 2: Race and Ethnicity Information at Research Sites: .....	54
Table 3: Student Participant Names and Grade Levels: .....	56
Table 4: Educator Participant Names and Titles: .....	57
Table 5: Cross Case Analysis .....	132

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Resilience-Promoting School Inventory .....	154
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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Risk to Resilience: Exploring Protective Factors for Students Experiencing Homelessness  
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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2013  
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In 2008-2009, almost one million children experiencing homelessness were enrolled in school; this number has increased by 41% between 2009 and 2011. Unfortunately, this trend has continued to increase; according to the most recent data from the National Center for Homeless Education, the number of homeless students has reached a record of 1,056,794. These students are one of the most marginalized and victimized populations in schools. They experience more daily stressors and are more at risk than their housed peers. Unfortunately, there is a dearth in educational research about the conditions, within the school context, that promote resilience in this population that is highly at-risk. Using a conceptual framework that draws upon literature on educational risks, resilience, school structures, and school climate with respect to homeless students, this comparative qualitative case study investigated the protective factors offered by two school models for homeless students. The study compared the institutional structures, school climate, and experiences of students served by distinct types of programs: a traditional school and an alternative school designed specifically for

homeless children and youth. By examining the impact of different school settings, the study contributes to a better understanding of the challenges, successes, and recommended research-based interventions designed to help a vulnerable student population. Findings suggest resilience-promoting protective factors recommended for a general student population apply to homeless students. Recommendations to schools interested in fostering resilience in their homeless population are provided.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The number of homeless<sup>1</sup> American school-aged children is daunting and growing. According to the National Center on Family Homelessness (2009), an estimated 2.3 to 3.5 million Americans endure homelessness at least once each year. Families with children make up 34% of the homeless population and statistics show this rate is increasing. Unaccompanied youth, or young people ranging in age from 16 to about 22 years who are not attached to families, comprise another 17% of the total homeless population (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). In the 2010-2011 school year, the number of homeless children rose to 1,065,794—an increase of 13% from the prior year (National center for Homeless Education, 2012).

Children and youth typically experience a host of problems in our educational system. Policies, procedures and practices can make it difficult for homeless students to enroll in school (Berliner, 2002; Medcalf, 2008; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1995). Once enrolled, children and youth impacted by homelessness are disproportionately absent from school when compared to their permanently housed peers (Gonzalez, 1992; Nunez, 1994; Rafferty & Shinn, 1991). Because of high absenteeism and transiency, it can be difficult for educators to identify educational needs and provide

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<sup>1</sup> The Stewart B. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a part of No Child Left Behind, defines “homeless” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate, nighttime residence and includes

1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (1) through (3) (The Mc-Kinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 2001).

the appropriate academic interventions (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Robertson, 1998). As a result, students impacted by homelessness experience academic underperformance and have higher rates of grade retention (Rafferty, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004; Robertson, 1998).

Obviously, there is much room for improvement when it comes to educating children who are experiencing instability with their housing. Fortunately, a key piece of federal legislation was enacted in 1987, and reauthorized in 2002 as part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), to improve the educational conditions for homeless children. According to the United States Department of Education (USDOE) (2004), the purpose of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is to address enrollment and attendance problems with the goal of students succeeding in school. Under the Act, schools have the legal obligation to remove barriers to a student's education. While the law has been effective in increasing the access to schooling for homeless children, issues of students experiencing success once enrolled still remain (Stronge, 1993).

### **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

This study's conceptual framework is divided into four key areas: risks, resilience, school structures, and school climate. The first section describes the health, academic, family relationship, and social emotional risks. Secondly, I review the literature on resilience within the general population and, more specifically, with homeless youth. In this section, I posit the research on resilience-promoting schools done by Benard (2004) as the lens through which I approached my investigation. Benard (2004) believes that resilience-promoting schools provide the following protective factors: caring relationships, high academic and social expectations, and opportunities for

meaningful participation and contribution. Next, I share what is already known regarding institutional structures and climate within schools—as they pertain directly to the protective factors. For the purposes of this investigation, school structures will include student support, curriculum and instruction, and staff awareness and development. Components of school climate will include safety, staff attitudes, academic expectations, school and classroom participation, and adult and peer relationships.

### **Risks**

Studies have investigated the barriers to education for homeless students that are oftentimes put in place by schools—delays in enrollment due to lack of residency and/or immunization documentation, lack of transportation, etc. and the federal legislation aimed at removing those barriers (Miller, 2009; Stronge, 1993). Additional research has focused on the transiency rate for this population reporting nearly all (97 %) of homeless children will move at least once within a one-year period (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). Health problems including asthma and malnutrition affect this population disproportionately (Cutuli, Hebers, Rinaldi, Masten, & Oberg, 2010; Wiecha, Dwyer, & Dunn-Strohecker, 1991; Grant, Shapiro, et al, 2007; McLean et al., 2004; Richards & Smith, 2007; Wood, Valdez, Hayashi, & Shen, 1990). Academic achievement, and how it has been negatively affected by these trends among homeless students, has also been investigated (Gonzalez, 1992; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Nunez, 1994; Rafferty et al. 2004; Rafferty & Shinn, 1991; Robertson, 1990). The breakdown of the family unit, often due to violence (Nunez 1994; Grant, Shapiro, et al., 2007; Wood et al., 1990), is a significant and long-lasting risk (Vostanis, Grattan, & Cumella, 1998). Finally, social-emotional concerns include internal and external

behavior issues such as depression, anxiety, defiance, and physical aggression to name a few (Davey, 1998; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Maslow, 1943; Masten et al., 1997; Robertson, 1998). Arguably, the aforementioned risks are linked to educational experiences of students experiencing homelessness.

### **Resilience**

The term *resilience* refers to a process of adaptation (Felsman, 1989; Williams, Lindsay, Kurtz, & Jarvis, 2001) and a phenomenon of desirable outcomes despite serious risks (Masten, 2005; Rutter, 1993). This concept of resilience has become well established in the fields of psychology and psychiatry (Rutter, 1987). Few studies, however, have been conducted on the resilience of homeless students and the assets that make them more successful (Masten et al., 1997). Hallett (2010) explored how the residential context, or living doubled-up, shaped resilience in the form of educational participation. This study will focus on how the school context contributes to resiliency in homeless youth.

Recognizing the signs of risk and the factors which contribute to resilience in homeless children is an imperative task for educators and researchers. Several authors provide elements of a school program they believe are key to promoting resilience in homeless students (Anooshian, 2005; Benard, 2004; Daniels, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Masten & Sesma, 1999; Posner, 1994; Tower, 1992). Benard (2004) synthesizes the literature and provides a framework of protective factors that need to be present in order for schools to foster resilience. As previously discussed, I will be using this framework as one of the lenses through which I will conduct my research.

### **School Structures**

In general, components of a school's institutional structures would include enrollment, school class size, transportation, etc. For the purposes of this investigation, I only included elements of institutional structures that influence the three protective factors in my conceptual framework.

### **School Culture**

School culture has many different facets and can include parent involvement and student recognition to name a few. Similar to school structures, I only considered features of school culture that directly affect the three protective factors proposed by Benard (2004). These areas include safety, staff attitudes, academic expectations, classroom and school participation, and adult and peer relationships.

Risk, resilience, school structures, and school culture are the four areas of my conceptual framework; they guide how I look at the topic of homeless education as a researcher and practitioner.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The risks for children and youth who are experiencing homelessness and attending school have been well documented. Rather than seeing homeless children as victims, some educators have taken a strengths-based approach to help their students identify qualities within themselves that make them successful despite significant risks, and help prepare students for the future (Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, & Nackerud, 2000). Although some studies have identified qualities within homeless children and youth to help them mitigate some of the risk factors associated with homelessness, we

know little about the school context and what schools, as social institutions, provide in terms of resilience-promoting protective factors. Furthermore, there is a dearth in scholarly research investigating homeless students' experiences in schools and the effect institutional structures and school culture can have on those experiences.

Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler (2006) identified three major models of schools that serve homeless students. Mainstream schools, or traditional public schools, are the most common. Transitional schools are separate schools for the homeless that are usually based within shelters and often lack sufficient space and resources. According to Mawhinney-Rhoads and Stahler, modified comprehensive schools, which are separate schools for homeless students that are not based within shelters, typically have more resources available to students.

There is controversy surrounding the different school models. One view is that it is in the best interest of homeless students to attend a traditional public school and receive the necessary academic or social-emotional support in this environment. Supporters of this approach feel that children who are homeless should attend school with their permanently housed peers and not doing so segregates and stigmatizes this population (Johnson, 1992). Swick (2005) adds to the discussion by explaining that many homeless families experience a redundant cycle of socializing with others who are homeless, responding to shelter and other human service workers, and repeating minimally-stimulating daily tasks.

Supporters of the modified comprehensive school model believe that, in general, the public school system is not designed to meet the needs of homeless students effectively (Medcalf, 2008). Others claim that students who are homeless and attend

traditional schools have a higher risk of being marginalized by their peers and school staff (Anooshian, 2003; Gewirtzman & Fodor, 1987; Masten et al., 1997) and do not receive the necessary academic or social-emotional services needed in order to make them successful (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Robertson, 1998).

Under current federal law, operating a separate school for homeless students is prohibited. An exemption in the McKinney-Vento Federal Homeless Assistance Act allows four counties in the nation to operate such schools (Maricopa, Orange, San Diego, and San Joaquin). These four counties were granted an exemption because they were in operation when McKinney-Vento was originally enacted in 1987 (McKinney-Vento Federal Homeless Assistance Act, 2001). Of the four counties with the exemption, only San Diego and San Joaquin currently operate alternative schools for homeless students. It is important to note that no research has been conducted on these programs.

By examining the impact of homelessness on school-age children, the schools they attend, and the staff with whom they interact, we gain a better understanding of the challenges, successes, and recommended research-based interventions designed to help a much-needed student population. Once these challenges, successes, and interventions are clearly identified, then real and meaningful work can begin by changing the status quo for students experiencing homelessness.

### **Research Questions**

The following overall research question and sub-questions guided this study:  
What protective factors (i.e. caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation) for homeless youth are offered at a traditional high school and

a modified comprehensive school specifically designed for students experiencing homelessness?

- a) In what ways do the institutional structures support or constrain the protective factors?
- b) How does a school's culture and climate influence the protective factors?
- c) How do students experience the protective factors?

By addressing these questions, this study illuminates the conditions under which homeless youth may have improved educational experiences.

### **Methods**

With this investigation, I conducted a comparative qualitative case study investigating the protective factors offered at two school models. More specifically, I compared the institutional structures, school climate, and experiences of students served by distinct types of programs: a traditional school and an alternative school designed specifically for homeless children and youth. Comparing and contrasting the educational experiences of students at a traditional school and at an alternative school lends itself to using a cross case analysis (Yin, 2009). For this investigation, I used school observations, semi-structured interviews with students and staff, and document analysis as the primary forms of data collection. A thorough explanation of the methods used for this investigation is provided in the third chapter. There are limitations to this proposed qualitative investigation. Generalizability, due to sample size, and concerns of positionality will be discussed in depth in the methods section. I will also present the manner in which these limitations are addressed.

## **Significance**

This study of the protective factors offered to homeless students at two school settings contributes new knowledge and informs practice and policy. As previously discussed, existing information is limited due to a lack of research on homeless children showing resilience in a school environment. This type of an investigation also informs educators and, hopefully, has a positive impact on educational practice. Depending on the level of awareness and practice, findings of this investigation can validate the work being done or it can suggest professional development with the goal of improving educational practice for any person having direct or indirect contact with homeless students. Lastly, child homelessness is a major issue with national attention as seen by increasing rates due to our current tough economic times and the McKinney-Vento Federal Homeless Assistance Act. Identifying effective practices and intervention programs can inform policy debates that can, in turn, improve legislation in order to better serve the needs of students who are homeless.

Homeless students are one of the most marginalized and victimized populations in schools. They experience more daily stressors and are more at risk than their housed peers. Unfortunately, there is a dearth in educational research about the conditions, within the school context, that promote resilience in this population that is highly at-risk. With education seen as a way out of homelessness, educators have a tremendous responsibility. Identifying students who are or have recently become homeless, looking out for the many signs of risk, and creating a school environment that fosters resilience is of utmost importance.

School leaders, at every level of an organization, may have a desire to prevent a system that perpetuates risks for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Often times what they do not possess is the knowledge on how to achieve this goal. By examining the impact of homelessness on school-age children, the schools they attend, and the staff they interact with, a better understanding of the challenges, successes, and research-based recommended strategies and interventions to help a much-needed student population emerges.

## Key Terms

The following key terms are used in this study:

*Alternative school.* The most recent definition from the U. S. Department of Education is:

Alternative schools and programs are designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools. The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically at risk of educational failure (as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school). (Carver & Lewis, 2010, p. 1)

*Homeless.* The Stewart B. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a part of No Child Left Behind, defines “homeless” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate, nighttime residence and includes:

1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of

this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (1) through (3) (The McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 2002).

According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the term "homeless" or "homeless individual or homeless person" includes the following:

1. An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
2. An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:
  - a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  - b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Because this investigation focuses on homeless students and the school context, I will be using the McKinney Vento definition of *homeless*.

*Protective factors.* Mechanisms that mitigate risk. Protective factors include: 1) personality features 2) family cohesion and 3) external support systems (Garmezy, 1985).

*Resilience.* A phenomenon of good outcomes despite serious risks or threats (Masten, 2005; Rutter, 1993).

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

In the chapters that follow, I discuss the resilience-promoting protective factors available to homeless youth at a traditional high school and a modified comprehensive school. Special attention is given to the influence each school's institutional structures and school climate have on the protective factors. How homeless youth experience these protective factors is considered throughout this investigation.

Following this introductory chapter, I discuss the literature on risks associated with child homelessness, resilience, and related school organizational components. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology used to collect and analyze data. Chapters Four and Five present findings on each of the school cases and Chapter Six provides the cross-case analysis. The final chapter discusses significant findings and recommendations for future research and practice.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The focus of this literature review will be to identify the risks associated with being a child who is homeless (e.g. health, academic, family breakdown, and social-emotional) and factors that promote resilience (e.g. internal, family dynamics, and external). Benard's (2004) research on school protective factors (i.e. caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation and contribution) will be presented as a conceptual framework for this investigation. Organizational components, as they relate directly to the conceptual framework, will be discussed. These include institutional structures such as student support, curriculum and instruction, and staff development. Relatedly, issues of school culture (i.e. safety, staff attitudes, academic expectations, classroom and school participation, and adult and peer relationships) will also be reviewed.

### **Risks Related to Homelessness**

The most recent data show there are over 1 million homeless children attending U.S. schools (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). Most research on homeless youth focuses on risk factors. This is not surprising as homeless children experience a host of factors placing them at risk including poor health (Cutuli et al., 2010; Wiecha et al., 1991; Fierman et al., 1991; Grant, Bowen, et al., 2007 Grant, Shapiro, et al, 2007; McLean et al., 2004; Richards & Smith, 2007;; Wood, et. al, 1990). The literature reports homeless students also have a higher risk of low academic achievement (Masten et al., 1997; Nunez, 1996; Obradović et al., 1999; Rafferty & Rollins, 1989; Rafferty et al. 2004; Robertson, 1998; USDOE, 2002). A breakdown of the family unit leaves parents with little social support (Bassuk, Rubin, & Lauriat, 1986;

Vostanis et al., 1998) and children at risk for persistent mental health problems (Vostanis et al., 1998). Social-emotional risk factors may include internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, low social support, and victimization (Cauce et al., 2000; Davey, 1998; Gewirtzman & Fodor, 1987; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Masten, Miliotis, Graham-Berman, Ramirez, & Neemann, 1993). To a school, all of these risk factors manifest themselves in the form students with exceptional needs. The responses from schools may vary, but researchers have reported results of low expectations and a pedagogy of poverty (Buckner, Bassuk, & Weinreb, 2001; Masten et al., 1997), which raises serious equity and social justice concerns. Each of these risks is elaborated below. After I review the risks, I will make the case that we are missing a key element when investigating homeless youth: resilience.

### **Health**

The literature describes several aspects of health in which homeless children are more at risk when compared to their permanently-housed peers. Health concerns include asthma, nutrition, and developmental delays (Cutuli et al., 2010; Wiecha et al., 1991; Fierman et al., 1991; Grant, Bowen, et al., 2007; Grant, Shapiro, et al, 2007; McLean et al., 2004; Richards & Smith, 2007; Wood, et. al, 1990). Within the educational context, these concerns are pressing since they manifest themselves in the form of missed days, distraction, inattention, and behavior problems (Cutuli et al., 2010).

There is great disparity between diagnosis and treatment of asthma in homeless children. Incidence rates of asthma among this population were much higher than the national average (Cutuli et al., 2010; Grant, Shapiro, et al, 2007; McLean et al., 2004). Unfortunately, homeless children who are diagnosed are substantially undertreated when

compared to housed children (McLean et al., 2004). The implications for not effectively controlling the illness with medication can be severe and include permanent lung damage and death (McLean et al., 2004). The consequences of suffering from asthma, as seen through an educational lens, are also significant. Levels of inattention and hyperactivity, behavior problems, missed school days, and lower academic performance have all been reported (Cutuli et al. 2010).

Experiencing homelessness only exacerbates asthma in children. When asthma care is in place, it can be jeopardized by the loss of housing (Grant, Shapiro, et al., 2007). A group of researchers explained it was highly possible that overcrowding in shelters or doubled up/tripled up living arrangements was associated with an increased exposure to respiratory tract infections which trigger asthma symptoms (McLean et al., 2004).

Another health concern for homeless students is malnutrition and the availability of healthy food. Homeless people eat fewer meals per day, go hungry more often, are more likely to have inadequate diets, and have a poorer nutritional status when compared to their housed counterparts (Wiecha et al., 1991). The diets of homeless children were noted to have repeated periods of food deprivation (Wood et al 1990). Not surprisingly, researchers recommend improving homeless persons' access to food and nutritional services in order to alleviate this problem (Wiecha et al., 1991).

Healthy nutritional behaviors are also compromised when a family experiences a loss of housing and forced to live in a shelter. The internal and external environments of the homeless shelters promoted the eating of foods low in nutritional value (Richards & Smith, 2007). Shelter policies commonly do not allow for food storage in the living unit. Moreover, a lack of refrigeration or cooking facilities impacts the type and quality of

food choices resulting in the purchase of foods high in salt and sugar (Richards & Smith, 2007; Grant, Shapiro, et al., 2007). Wood and colleagues (1990) corroborated other findings and reported the diets of homeless children contained little amounts of fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats and excessive amounts of grains, starch, or fast food options (Wood et al., 1990).

Unfortunately, food options outside of the family shelter are limited as well. Due to lack of funds for transportation, families often rely on the stores near the shelter for food alternatives. This often results in very limited variety of food and decreased food supply (Richards & Smith, 2007). The lack of healthy food options, within or outside of the shelter, pushes parents to feed their children in an unhealthy manner. This nutritional lifestyle, in turn, has an impact on a child's health.

Homeless children exhibit a greater degree of nutritional stress (Fierman et al., 1991). Being overweight or obese are the major forms of malnutrition in homeless families (Schwarz, Garrett, Hampsey, & Thompson, 2007). One study found 45% of homeless children to be overweight or obese (Richards & Smith, 2007). In fact, the most common growth abnormality for this population is obesity (Wood et al., 1990).

A host of other health conditions are reported in the literature and seem to be rooted in homelessness. Overcrowding seen in homeless shelters and doubled/tripled up housing arrangements are associated with a higher rate of middle ear infections. Furthermore, persistent middle ear infections are associated with developmental delays (Grant, Shapiro, et al., 2007). Developmental problems are in general more prevalent among homeless children (Grant, Shapiro, et al., 2007; Wood, et al., 1990).

## **Academic Achievement**

Historically, access to educational services had been a major hurdle for students experiencing homelessness. Fortunately, Congress established the McKinney Act's Education of Homeless Children and Youth in 1987—the act was reauthorized in 2001 and renamed “McKinney Vento Federal Homeless Assistance Act.” One of the primary goals of this legislation was to eliminate any barriers to education (Stronge, 1993). In 1995, the USDOE commissioned a national evaluation of the state and local efforts to meet the educational needs of homeless students as a means to overcome the barriers impacting enrollment, attendance, and school success. The authors of the report concluded homeless students' frequent moves from school to school were their most significant barrier to academic success. Furthermore, state officials responsible for ensuring the rights afforded to homeless children were being honored were so preoccupied with the basic task of getting children enrolled in school that the quality of the services they received once enrolled was of little or no concern (Anderson, Janger, & Paston, 1995). While challenges in students accessing services still remain, they seem to occur less frequently and the current focus appears to have shifted to improving the academic experience of those students that have gained access to schools (Stronge, 1993)

One way to gauge the academic experiences of homeless students is to investigate their academic performance. Obradović et al. (2009) conducted a longitudinal study in which they assessed reading and math achievement of homeless and highly mobile students in grades two through five. Their findings indicate lower initial achievement scores than their more advantage peers; the homeless/highly mobile students showed the greatest risk. Cutuli and colleagues corroborated these findings in a later investigation

(2012). Finally, when studying early reading skills and academic achievement trajectories in homeless students, researchers found these students had the lowest average reading scores compared to children living in stable settings (Herbers et al., 2012). Furthermore, when students in this study were grouped by socio-economic status, those who experience homelessness also experienced the highest academic risk.

Academic underachievement or underperformance puts a student at risk for grade retention. Children with high rates of lifetime moves are 35% more likely to be retained (Wood et al., 1993). In Robertson's 1998 study, 23% of children who move frequently had repeated a grade as opposed to 12% who never or infrequently moved. Indeed, students experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of retention due to low academic achievement (Rafferty et al., 2004). A focus on basic survival and not completing in-class and homework assignments or inattention to classroom instruction was suggested as a cause for low academic achievement (Robertson, 1998).

Unfortunately, retaining a student is a counterproductive intervention according to a variety of educational researchers. Holding a child back not only fails to help them catch up with their peers and succeed in school, but contributes to academic failure and behavioral difficulties (Hess, 1987; Holmes, & Matthews, 1984). The amount of stress caused by retaining a student is tremendous. Researchers indicate next to blindness and death of a parent, grade retention is rated as the most stressful event in child's life (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 1986). There is also a strong connection between grade retention and dropping out of school (Hess, 1987). Rumberger and Larson (1998) conducted a longitudinal study which included 12,000 students and concluded that being retained

before eighth grade increased the likelihood of dropping out by twelfth grade by more than 200%.

When it comes to educating homeless students, one of the many challenges schools face is providing the appropriate and necessary services. Kerbow (1996) investigated the extent of urban school enrollment stability in Chicago public elementary schools and its impact on students. In this longitudinal study, the author observed the transiency rate of a random sample of 270 students taken from the total student population of 13,908 and noted 54% of the students had transitioned out of the original school placement. The researcher reported a general decline in learning associated with mobility and suggested possible causes as lack of exposure to foundational elements necessary for higher order skills and a disruption of the pacing of learning for the transitioning student. These findings were for all students who moved homes, not just those who were displaced from homes altogether.

Due to the high rate of transiency, students miss large chunks of academic material and are typically below grade level (Robertson, 1998). It is difficult for teachers, counselors, and other educators to identify educational needs for students due to their frequent moves (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Moreover, when the appropriate services are determined, students may be unenrolled before the services are implemented. In New York City, only half of students identified as needing special education services continued receiving such specialized services once they became homeless (Rafferty & Rollins, 1989). Nunez (1996) concurred, finding that the lack of coordination and resources leads to lower than appropriate enrollment in special education, English language development, and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs.

Despite a preponderance of low academic performance among homeless students, education is seen by families as important; academic underperformance is not necessarily an indication of the value placed on education by homeless students and their families. Rafferty et al. (2004) found participants in their study indicated a strong value for education—96% of formerly homeless and 99% of their non-homeless peers rated education as very important. Both groups also reported high educational goals as defined by pursuing educational training beyond high school.

### **Family Breakdown**

Analyzing the structure of families experiencing homelessness reveals a breakdown in that structure. Reasons for family breakdown, implications for social support as well as effects of family breakdown will be further discussed. The literature suggests serious family concerns, like domestic violence, were reported more frequently among homeless families than for housed families.

Researchers who analyzed the characteristics of sheltered homeless families found 94% of those families were single parent families and headed by women (Bassuk et al., 1986). In many cases, domestic violence is the direct cause of families' homelessness (Nunez, 1994). One investigation found the most common reason for becoming homeless, was to escape violence—either by a partner or ex-partner (Vostanis et al., 1998). With regards to children, the overall prevalence of domestic violence among homeless children was reported to be at 34% (Grant, Shapiro, et al., 2007) and significantly higher when compared to housed children (Grant et al., 2007; Wood et al., 1990).

As previously mentioned, family violence typically leaves mothers solely responsible for the family unit. In addition to having to take on the role of a single parent, they often do so with little social support. In fact, two-thirds of the mothers in one survey were reported to completely lack or have few supportive relationships (Bassuk et al., 1986). Vostanis et al. (1998) concurred with these findings and suggested homeless mothers have significantly less social support. When support is minimal or non-existent, parents sometime turn to their children. As reported by Bassuk et al. (1986) 25% of mothers named their child as the major source of support. For a child struggling with his or her own risks, this can be a tremendous responsibility.

Indeed, the impact of family breakdown is lasting. Even after attaining permanent housing, children remain vulnerable to risk factors such as family breakdown and domestic violence (Vostanis et al., 1998). Furthermore, the impact of abuse and poor social support is seen in the mental health of children; mothers who had these experiences were reported to be more likely to have children with persistent mental health problems (Vostanis et al., 1998). This information is important for educators who serve a homeless population. Readily identifying students who possess the risk factors of family breakdown allows educators to refer those individuals to the appropriate support services.

### **Social Emotional Well-Being**

Homelessness takes a toll on children's academic as well as social-emotional well-being. Children experiencing homelessness often exhibit short attention span, withdrawal, aggression, speech delays, sleep disorders, regressive behaviors, and inappropriate social interactions with adults and peers (Robertson, 1998). They have also been noted to have a greater number of behavior problems and maladaptive coping

patterns (Davey, 1998). Regrettably, children having ongoing difficulties in meeting their basic needs are at high risk for psychopathology (Maslow, 1943). With these social-emotional concerns added to the already lengthy list of risks for homeless students, it is imperative educators be informed of behaviors that may be exhibited in the school environment.

In the school setting, Masten and colleagues (1997) noted children who had been homeless had a greater amount of school-related problems in spite of educational barriers being addressed. Teachers also reported serious adjustment challenges among a substantial portion of homeless children (Masten et al., 1997). In one study, students who had experienced homelessness were less likely to have had mostly positive experiences in school as reported by their parents (Rafferty et al., 2004).

The adverse and unstable living conditions that homeless children and youth experience can have a tremendous impact on their lives. That impact may manifest itself as externalizing or internalizing behavior problems. Achenbach (1978) describes externalizing behavior problems, or “symptoms of conflict with the environment” (Achenbach, 1966, pg. 10) such as defiance, impulsivity, disruptiveness, aggression, antisocial features, and overactivity. Examples of internalizing behavior problems, or “problems within the self” (Achenbach, 1966, pg 10), include withdrawal, dysphoria, and anxiety. Homeless girls have been reported to have higher internalizing behavior problems (Cauce, et al., 2000; Masten et al., 1993) while homeless boys are more prevalent to exhibit behavior problems externally (Cauce et al., 2000). These patterns of behavior are consistent with the general population (Cauce et al., 2000). Passeio-Rabideau and Toro (1997) reported six times as many homeless children as expected

exhibited externalizing behavior problems that indicated the need for mental health services; four times the amount expected exhibited internalizing behavior problems. Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Chen, Rouse and Culhane also report a strong relationship between child homelessness and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (2012). Further, these researchers report that a break to early social ties leads to difficulty in developing cooperative learning skills needed in a classroom setting.

Other research results showed a higher incidence and intensity of anxiety and depression (Robertson, 1998). Highly-mobile children in poverty are also at high risk for broken bonds with teachers, friends, and other potential sources of security and positive opportunity (Obradović et al., 2009). Rates of emotional problems like anxiety and depression are extremely high among children living in emergency shelters and far higher than among impoverished children in permanent housing (Davey, 1998; Molnar, Rath, & Klein, 1990; Passeio et al., 1997). Along with anxiety and depression, stress is another risk factor of which homeless children have significantly higher levels (Davey, 1998; Masten et al., 1993).

Themes of loss and hopelessness were also noted when observing students at a separate school for homeless students (Bennett, 2007). Loss is a broad category and can include loss of a parent (to abandonment, imprisonment, mental illness, substance abuse or death), loss of a home, pets, toys, neighbors, and friends. This same researcher also reported a high prevalence of a sense of hopelessness among students.

External behavior problems may be more evident because of the way they manifest. The lack of routine and parental supervision contributes to the particularly high level of externalizing behavior. Passeio and colleagues (1997) explained that this

phenomenon could be attributed to modeling: children see violence and imitate it. Stress associated with violence may make mothers especially unavailable for consistent parenting, resulting in inappropriate behavior on the part of the child (Passeio et al., 1997). Children with high rates of lifetime moves are 77% more likely to have four or more behavior problems during a school year (Wood et al., 1990).

With a higher prevalence of external behavior problems, it may be no surprise that homeless children have difficulties making and maintaining friendships and relationships. To make matters worse, shelter regulations regarding mixed gender housing sometimes force fathers and teenage boys to find shelter apart from the rest of the family (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Further, the physical, emotional, and mental stress of homelessness can strain relations between parents, among siblings, and between parents and their children (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003).

Due to the already discussed high rate of mobility among homeless children, it may be extremely difficult for these children and youth to make and maintain friendships. Julianelle and Foscarinis (2003) reported students were hesitant to establish relationships with educators and other adults in school as a defense mechanism. Moreover, without social support from adults and peers, a child's self-esteem can suffer (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Below average self-esteem was also reported in Davey's (1998) research; he found homeless children to be involved in significantly fewer social activities and organizations and have fewer friends. Strained peer relationships can lead to widespread negative outcomes including avoidance of school, poor school performance, and even dropping out (Anooshian, 2003).

Some of the issues surrounding the concern of relationships may be due to homeless children being maladjusted; in other cases, these children are victimized by their more advantaged counterparts. Stigmatization by peers of homeless children is common (Gewirtzman & Fodor, 1987). In another study, economic distress was found to be a predictor of victimization by peers—above and beyond parental mediation (Anooshian, 2003).

The education of homeless students presents serious equity and social justice concerns. Urban homelessness affects children of color disproportionately (Bassuk et al., 1997; Masten et al., 1997). While African American children make up 15% of the total population of children in the U.S., they make up 47% of the total population of homeless children (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). Racism and prejudice were also offered as additional risk factors that homeless students of color face in schools (Masten et al., 1997). Moreover, Buckner et al. (2001) revealed teachers have been found to have lower academic expectations for children of color. When education is considered to be the way out of homelessness (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009) and racism and low academic expectations are burdens presented to homeless children, serious social concerns arise.

### **Resilience**

The above section focused on the risks associated with homelessness. This section will shift our attention towards the concept of resilience. In the past three decades, the concept of resilience has garnered tremendous attention and become well-established in the field of psychology and psychiatry (Rutter, 1987). Resilience refers to a phenomenon of good outcomes despite serious risks or threats (Masten, 2005; Rutter, 1993).

Resilience is seen as a dynamic process of adaptation (Felsman, 1989; Williams, Lindsey, Kurtz, & Jarvis, 2001); it is regarded as a function of the individual's unique strengths, capacities, vulnerabilities, and "goodness of fit" with the demands and opportunities of the environment (Felsman, 1989). Therefore, because resilience is an ongoing process and not an event or fixed mindset, the magnitude of resilience an individual displays toward any given risk at any given point will vary. As long as the balance between risks and protective factors is manageable, people are able to adapt and cope adequately (Rutter, 1987). As such, it is important to note that resilience is not synonymous with invulnerability. Those who have, at one point, displayed signs of resilience, do not possess absolute immunity to risk during challenging times (Rutter, 1993).

In one conceptual framework of resilience there are three main factors: 1) stress/risk mechanism, 2) coping/protective mechanisms, and 3) buffering/mediating mechanisms (Garmezy, 1985). These stress and risk mechanisms for homeless students have been established in the first part of this literature review. The coping and protective mechanisms that foster resilience will be explored further. Rutter (1987) proposes reducing or altering the risk as a mediating mechanism and a possible vehicle for resilience. While making permanent and affordable housing available and addressing other factors which contribute to poverty makes sense, it may be more feasible to take a closer look at the coping and protective mechanisms as a more immediate solution.

Coping and protective mechanisms include: 1) personality features (e.g., self-esteem and self-efficacy), 2) family cohesion (such as absence of discord or conflict), and 3) external support systems (Garmezy, 1985). It should be noted that protective mechanisms are relative to any given risk. For example, the act of an adolescent running

away from home can be considered a significant risk. Running away, however, can be in response to an even greater risk of abuse or neglect in the home (Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, Thomas, & Yockey, 2001; Williams et al., 2001).

Werner (1993) conducted a longitudinal study of more than two hundred children living in poverty on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The researchers found almost one third of the subjects developed into competent, caring, and confident adults.

Characteristics such as high intelligence, high self-esteem, and strong self-efficacy were noted as contributing factors to their resilience. Moreover, the researchers suggested self-esteem and self-efficacy seem to be promoted through supportive relationships. Resilient children had supportive families whose dynamics included warmth, affection, and emotional support. In instances where there was a lack of family support, children exhibiting resilience often formed relationships with other adults. Anooshian (2003) corroborated these findings after conducting an investigation of homeless children and the effects of social isolation and rejection. Much like Werner (1993), Anooshian (2003) determined resilient children often report that an adult took a special interest in them.

One potential difference between the participants in the Kauai study and children experiencing homelessness is the timing of the exposure to risk. The children in the Kauai study grew up living in poverty and that could certainly be the case for many chronically homeless students. Others, however, can suddenly become homeless due to a variety of reasons (i.e. head(s) of household's loss of employment, conflict in the home, etc.). Now that resilience in a general population of youth is better understood, a closer look at resilience and homeless youth is warranted.

## **Resilience and Homeless Youth**

The majority of the research on resilience among homeless students focuses on youth as opposed to younger children (Kidd & Shahar, 2008; Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, & Nackerud, 2000; Rew et al., 2001). Although reviewing the literature on resilience among homeless youth does not provide a complete picture, it does provide an insight on the social-emotional risks experienced by the population and protective mechanisms employed to overcome those risks.

One of the risks discussed earlier was that of a lack of social support from adults and peers and its negative impact on a child's self-esteem (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Because of this low self-esteem, homeless children tend to be involved in fewer social activities and have fewer friends (Davey, 1998). Homeless children who exhibit resilience have notably higher self-esteem and less sense of loneliness, feeling trapped, suicidal ideations.

Rutter (1985) describes the term "steeling effect of stressors" (p. 600) as unpleasant and potentially hazardous challenges that prepare individuals to cope with future challenges. Certainly, with all the risks homeless students endure, they can be seen as victims of society. Rather than seeing homeless children as victims, educators can take a strengths-based approach, help their students identify those steeling qualities within themselves, and help prepare students for the future (Lindsey et al., 2000).

While examples of homeless students experiencing great academic risk are common in the literature, some studies indicate wide variability in the academic success of homeless students with large numbers of students showing academic resilience. For example, in a longitudinal investigation examining reading achievement scores in a large

urban school district, many students designated as homeless or highly mobile showed good or above average test patterns (Obradović et al., 2009). The author suggested more research is needed to understand why some homeless students show academic success in comparison to their less adaptive peers and children experiencing success who are not facing the challenge of being homeless (Obradović et al., 2009). In a study focusing on the educational risks of homeless students, Masten et al. (1997) also observed some students who held their own academically as indicated by standardized test results. These investigators urged more research on academically successful homeless children with the goal of guiding policy and programming to improve the resilience of other high-risk children. Knowing that resilience is attainable for homeless students, a closer look at schools that foster success with this population is warranted.

### **Resilience-Promoting School Programs**

When homeless children attend school, it is a perfect opportunity to foster resilience. School may be the only stable place in the lives of homeless children. With that in mind, researchers have recommended theoretical models or specific components of school models, which can promote resilience. Benard (2004) offered three protective factors within a school setting that promote resilience in young people: 1) caring relationships, 2) high expectations, and 3) opportunities for meaningful participation.

Some of these components are seen in other practical models. Masten and colleagues (1999) agreed that caring relationships are important and focused on positive peer relationships. Extracurricular activities were recommended (Masten et al., 1999) and serve as an example of Benard's (2004) opportunities for meaningful participation. A third component offered was linkages to special services (Masten et al., 1999). Given

all the previously discussed risks more prevalent among a homeless student, referrals to special services are warranted.

In the context of educating homeless children and youth, it is critical that educators and educational leaders identify factors that make some children resilient and foster those in others. Indeed, the numbers of homeless students, along with their social-emotional and academic risks, have significant implications for schools. Fortunately, success is possible as evidenced by the research. Schools have the responsibility to provide effective educational programs to meet the needs and foster resilience of these students. The school programs described below have some, if not all, components recommended by educational researchers.

Project Children's Center, an early childhood education program in an urban family shelter in Dorchester, Massachusetts, is a working model of an education-based program that builds resilience for children who are experiencing homelessness and/or poverty. The pre-school program enrolls a maximum of twenty-four students and is fully licensed by the state as a group day care center. The curriculum is developmentally based, focusing on eight central components: developing socially and emotionally, building self-esteem, fostering creativity, self-expression, problem-solving, and building cognitive skills. Social expressiveness is a mechanism significant in protecting against stress; this is important because sociability can be developed in intervention programs (Luthar, 1991). Douglas (1996) noted "as children settle into the routines and safety of the shelter, interfering behaviors, which are so often cited as characteristics of children who are homeless, tend to disappear" (p. 747). Once those behaviors are minimized, the focus can be shifted to building academic and social-emotional successes.

The program philosophy at the Project Children's Center is one that expects achievement and looks for success in children who are homeless in order to foster and nurture strengths and competencies. In the program, children successfully master the eight concepts and skills and develop meaningful relationships. This program provides children with protective factors that may help counter the chaos and instability caused by homelessness. Douglass (1996) explained that programs which offer the support of nurturing adults, high expectations, and opportunities for responsibility can have a positive influence on low income children—homeless or otherwise.

Stewart et al. (2004) investigated the correlation between Health Promoting Schools (HPS) and their ability to promote and build resilience with at-risk elementary school students. The study took place in Queensland, Australia and comprised students in grades three, five, and seven. A school site implementing the HPS model is described as having: 1) shared decision-making and planning, 2) community participation, 3) supportive physical and social environment, 4) school community relations 5) clearly articulated health policies, and 6) access to appropriate health services. The researchers suggested that the development of student resilience, the sense of feeling connected to adults and teachers, having good peer relationships, and having a strong sense of autonomy and self-efficacy are influenced by the degree to which schools support and apply the HPS model (Stewart et al., 2004). Although the participants in this study were not homeless, the investigation provides some insight on the effectiveness of the HPS model to build resilience in an at-risk population. The HPS model, in part or whole, could certainly be used in an environment which has a high concentration of students experiencing homelessness. All of the components of the HPS model could be effective

in building protective factors and resilience in this population. When discussing best practices among school programs, school structures need to be considered; a closer look at this area of the literature follows.

### **School Institutional Structures**

From the literature presented earlier in this chapter, it is evident that educating homeless children and adolescents pose numerous challenges to school personnel (Lindsey & Williams, 2002). Educational researchers are also clear that US public schools, as educational institutions, are having a difficult time effectively meeting those challenges (Berliner, 2002; Medcalf, 2008; Rafferty & Shinn, 1991; Robertson, 1998). For the purposes of this literature review and investigation, I consider schools as institutional settings. Murphy and Tobin (2011) define *institutions* as “places which control aspects of clients’ lives” (p. 246). Applying this definition to a general student population seems appropriate, and doing so for a homeless student population is quite fitting.

Satisfying the minimum federal guidelines by providing access to school seems to be the primary concern for schools; the quality of educational services a child receives is secondary (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Garguilo (2006) supports this claim and reports that, despite federal legislation guaranteeing educational opportunity for homeless students, their needs frequently go unfulfilled. Unfortunately, when incongruence between the needs of students and services provided by the school is apparent, the mismatch is often resolved in favor of the school and not the students (Tierney, Gupton, & Hallett, 2008).

As part of the solution, scholars argue that a multidimensional approach is necessary to ensure the success of homeless students. Furthermore, interventions must be holistic and incorporate a variety of interventions and a continuum of services in order to address the complex and diverse needs of students (Hallett, 2007; Josefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Williams & Korinek, 2000). What follows is a review of the structural components of the school that make up that multidimensional approach and relate directly to the resilience promoting protective factors.

### **Student Support**

Earlier in this chapter, the academic and social emotional risks of homeless students were presented. In response, schools should provide structural components that directly address those risks; they include counseling, mentor programs, guidance on college transition, vocational training, academic support and intervention, extracurricular activities, and opportunities for community service.

**Counseling.** Students experiencing homelessness should have access to a school counselor who can build a strong and trusting relationship with them and guide them in working through various social emotional (Swick, 2000) or physical (Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992) issues. Of primary focus may be dealing with concerns of self-esteem, self-acceptance, and stress (Stronge, 1992).

Proper implementation will be required in order for the services to have the most desirable outcomes. Risks must be adequately addressed by providing an emotionally safe place for students to express feelings and concerns appropriately. Effective school counseling could produce results of less stress, an improvement in school behavior, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships (Johnson, 1992).

**Mentor programs.** Peneul and Davey (2000) report that homeless students who have a positive relationship with a supportive adult make healthier decisions about their lives and ways to cope with adversity. Formal mentoring programs may be extremely valuable if carried out in a nonthreatening and nonauthoritarian manner because homeless youth may be distrustful of adults—especially those in roles of authority (Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992). Indeed, the results of a mentoring program are desirable; mentoring has been linked to increased school engagement and making the school a safer and more supportive place (Julianelle, 2007). When it comes to formal mentoring relationships, adults are not the only possibility to fill roles as mentors; peers can provide much needed support to a student in need.

When a homeless student transitions into a new school in the middle of the year, he or she faces a lot of uncertainty about the new environment, school rules, and routines. "Buddy programs" that match newly enrolled homeless students with peer helpers can assist the newly-enrolled child and acclimating to their new school environment (Johnson, 1992; Pawlas, 1994). Once a student has successfully transitioned into their new school environment, they can in turn become sources of peer support for incoming homeless students (Hightower et al., 1997).

**College transition.** There is very little information in the literature regarding this type of student support. Scholars do note that students will need help managing college applications as well as securing financial aid once admitted (Pires & Silber, 1991). Tierney and colleagues (2008) noted that youth residing in shelters and interested in college do not typically discuss post-secondary goals or aspirations with shelter staff.

**Vocational training.** To help break the cycle of poverty and homelessness, schools have a responsibility to prepare youth by providing necessary life and job skills. Unfortunately, homeless youth are often ill-prepared for work and require intensive preparation including job training and placement (Robertson, 1990). Other scholars argue that homeless adolescents are in need of practical life skills in the areas of making appointments, money management, housing, household management, health and community resources (Aviles & Helfrich, 1991; Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992).

**Homework support.** Homeless students have weak support systems to sustain effective homework practices (i.e. limited physical space, absence of routines, a lack of a private and quiet space, and no home libraries or materials) (Stronge, 2000; Tierney et al., 2008). To remedy the situation, schools and educators should have a good understanding of these obstacles and find ways to provide a supervised place in which students can complete homework at school (Gonzalez, 1992; Eddowes, 1992). Solutions may call for nontraditional approaches and can include tutoring programs using peers, older students, and adults (Eddowes, 1992; Hightower et al. 1997; Johnson, 1992; Pawlas, 1994).

**Extracurricular activities.** Researchers have explored homeless students and their participation in extracurricular activities (i.e. after school programs, sports, clubs and organizations, etc.). They conclude that participation by this student group is low (Tierney et al., 2000) and schools can do so much more to assist homeless children and youth by creating meaningful opportunities for involvement in a variety of school activities (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Not participating in activities outside of the school day precludes students from meaningful and potentially beneficial opportunities.

There are a number of potential benefits to homeless students participating in extracurricular activities. The literature suggests afterschool programs are associated with more positive outcomes than other types of after school care (i.e. self-care, parent care, or informal adult supervision). There is also a strong correlation between after school program attendance and improved academic achievement, behavior, peer relationships and emotional adjustment (Nunez, 1994; Posner & Vandell, 1994)—key benefits for children who are more often consumed by academic and social emotional risks. These school-organized events are critical for engaging youth in school (Julianelle, 2007; Nunez, 1994). Programs that allow students to develop their interests, knowledge, and skills are also advisable and regarded as using effective strategies that convey a message that a school has high expectations and provides opportunities for meaningful participation. Lastly, participating in extracurricular programs can provide both an emotional and physical outlet, which can foster positive relationships among children, youth, and adults (Hightower et al., 1997).

**Community service.** In a general student population, students experience a more positive school attachment and are more motivated to learn when they contribute to their physical and social environment (Brooks, 1994, Werner, 1993). Community service programs foster a partnership among youth, educators, and adults in the community as they work together to improve their community (Benard, 2004). It is imperative students feel a sense of support for service learning within the school environment; this support, paired with a high-quality academic program, is recommended for this high-risk population.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

The majority of the research regarding educating homeless children and youth has focused on the larger school context and issues of enrollment and access, attendance, behavior etc. (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). This section of the literature review will focus on institutional issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Educational researchers agree that homeless students do not require a different or separate curriculum; they need access to the same high quality curriculum available to their peers (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). At an organizational, or school-wide, level what is necessary is a willingness to be flexible and restructure schedules, social organizations, and functions in order to best meet the needs of children who may have no real concept of time and place (Quint, 1994). As an example, educational programs offering partial school credits and credit recovery seem to be especially helpful (Parrish et al., 2003) because they allow homeless students to fill in gaps in coursework (Murphy & Tobin 2011).

Alternative school programs are noted by some to be worthy of consideration because they can provide homeless students with alternate pathways to success. Julianelle (2007) argues that homeless teens are often in situations where they are struggling to meet basic needs and make complex decisions without parental support. For some students, enduring these situations and attending traditional schools can be difficult if not impossible; alternative programs that provide flexibility and meet students' educational needs may be a viable option.

Whether at a traditional or alternative school program, educators serving homeless students have more than just academics to consider. Because of the academic

and social emotional risks students impacted by homelessness experience, scholars recommend the students be assigned to the most effective teachers and schools (Murphy & Tobin 2011).

Research suggests that pedagogically, teachers will want to employ two key instructional strategies: individualized instructional programs (Eddowes & Butcher, 2000; Eddowes & Hranitz, 1989) and cooperative learning approaches (Gonzalez, 1992; Ritter & Gottfried, 2002). While, at first glance, these two recommendations appear to be in contradiction of one another, educational researchers argue that there is a benefit to each approach.

An individualized instructional program is evidenced by presenting lessons in short units and breaking assignments into small pieces of work. These strategies are helpful for highly mobile students because they help ensure assignment completion before a sudden departure (Gewirtzman & Fodor, 1987; Woods & Harrison, 1994). In the same vein, weekly report cards or progress reports are advisable in order to provide immediate feedback and ensure an easier transition when a child moves to a new school (Berliner, 2002).

The goal of a cooperative learning approach is for students to learn and master important academic content while developing much-needed social skills with peers. This approach, where students are required to construct answers collectively, can be valuable in helping homeless children develop strong peer relationships, strengthen academic achievement, and improve coping and problem solving skills (Eddowes, 1992; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Wilder, Obiakor, & Algozzine, 2003). Lindsey and colleagues (2000)

support this approach and add that homeless children would benefit from increased skills in interacting with other people “in more constructive ways” (p. 137).

One area to consider, as it directly impacts curriculum and instruction, is student assessment. Homeless students would benefit from schools adopting flexible assessment schedules that accommodate children and youth who enroll outside of regular assessment periods (Hightower et al., 1997). According to the National Center for Homeless Education (2006), gathering valuable data about language proficiency, math and language arts abilities will ensure expedited and appropriate placement in various programs (i.e. special education, GATE, English Language Development, etc.). At a local level, assessment data will help the classroom teacher make an informed decision as to the appropriate reading program, cooperative learning grouping, or subject area skills needing reinforcement (Johnson, 1992). Therefore, it is important to have this information readily available.

### **Staff Awareness and Development**

Educators who know students well witness and/or become aware of family homeless crises as they unfold (Miller, 2011). Specifically, these school personnel tend to be teachers and counselors because they have more direct and everyday contact with students. Unfortunately, some educators lack awareness about the plight of homeless students.

Funkhouser and colleagues (2002) report that most educators are unaware of the serious consequences homelessness has on school-age children and youth. Lack of awareness and proper training can lead to the following: 1) not recognizing signs of homelessness, 2) not relating with homeless students, 3) school staff inadvertently

exhibiting insensitivities towards homeless students, and thus, making school a less inviting place, and 4) not reaching students academically (Johnson, 1992; Nunez, 1994; Whitman, Accardo, Boyert, & Kendagor, 1990).

Professional development focused on how to better work with students who are homeless is necessary. The goals of this type of training would be to sensitize school personnel to the effects of homelessness and to enhance their ability to educate homeless children and youth. Recommended focus areas include identification of homeless students and ways to be more responsive to the challenges impeding educational success (Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992; Swick, 2004).

### **School Culture and Climate**

Successfully educating homeless students is more than an academic issue. Ensuring success for this vulnerable population will require school staff to create a culture of warmth and stability both at the school and classroom levels (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Indeed, the goal is to develop a positive, caring, safe, and well-structured school environment (Pawlas, 1994; Swick, 2005) “not simply ones into which the homeless students are fitted” (Murphy & Tobin, 2011, p. 246).

Improving the school culture and climate can have tremendous benefits for students impacted by homelessness. A nurturing environment will foster sense of belonging, security, and self-confidence in the classroom and school. This, in turn, will provide the foundation for increased academic performance, motivation, self-discipline, responsibility, and the ability to more effectively problem solve (Brooks, 1994). School culture components including safety, educator attitudes, academic expectations,

opportunities for classroom and school participation, and relationships with adults and peers will now be presented.

### **Safety**

Earlier in this chapter, domestic violence was cited as one of the main causes of family homelessness. Experiencing this type of a traumatic event will undoubtedly affect a child. In a world of uncertainty, a child's school may be the only safe place (Eddowes, 1992). Quint (1994) explained that most homeless children feel frightened and alone. Therefore, schools are urged to provide a structured, stable, and safe environment (Gewirtzman & Fodor, 1987).

### **Staff Attitudes**

Murphy and Tobin (2011) recommend that schools become more and less institutional the same time. Schools will need to become better equipped to work with a homeless population and address and improve institutional issues of safety, health, education, nutrition etc. On the other hand, this special student population also requires a school environment that is less institutional and bureaucratic. Schools can accomplish this by breaking down core elements of institutions (impersonality, division, and specialization of work) and replacing them with elements that embody a community like senses of empowerment and high personalization (Murphy & Tobin 2011). Quint (1994) recommends schools act "more like a family than an institution" (p. 90). In order for the school environment to be warm and nurturing, educators need to have a sense of ownership and responsibility for their students (Ziesemer & Marcoux, 1992).

A review of literature reveals that schools can be effective in reducing the educational impact of homelessness on children and adolescents (Duffield & Lovell,

2008; Reganick, 1997). In order for this to happen, however, educators must understand that access to a school is simply not enough; having high academic expectations and providing high-quality education is also important (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1990). Indeed, high expectations for academic achievement and behavior are at the core of schools that promote resilience.

Through the efforts of dedicated school staff, homeless children can reach ambitious learning targets (Landsman, 2006; Medcalf, 2008; Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992). Benard (2004) reminded the reader that, along with those high expectations, support for students is necessary. Burkham and Lee (2003) investigated this relationship between social support and high academic expectations and concluded that students who reported having strong social support and attended schools with low academic expectations learned very little. On the contrary, students who reported considerable support from educators had high academic gains if they also attended schools where they were pushed academically.

### **Classroom and School Participation**

Researchers note that offering ways for homeless students to be meaningfully involved in classroom and school activities enables the progress of social skills and peer relationships (Douglass, 1996; Hallet, 2007). Examples of these activities include tutoring younger students, athletics, community service, after school clubs, arts and theater classes, and other extracurricular activities (Wilder et al., 2003). Leadership at the school level and participating in planning of school services are also recommended (Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992; Quint, 1994; Swick, 2000).

### **Adult and Peer Relationships**

A major challenge impeding success for homeless students is the lack of social attachments and high-quality relationships (Anooshian, 2000). Anooshian also urges school staff to help homeless children build positive relationships in school settings (2000). Other researchers support this claim and add that building networks of significant social relationships is the most effective strategy to build an advantageous culture for homeless students (Anooshian, 2005; Williams, 2003).

Research highlights the power of skilled, caring, and thoughtful educators to tip the scale from risk to resilience. Specifically, the literature identifies teachers and district-level homeless liaisons as key people with whom homeless children and youth should have established partnerships. Classroom teachers can provide the warmth and nurturing students in homeless situations need. As discussed earlier, the relationships that students experiencing homelessness have with family members may, at times, be strained or non-existent. Benard (2004) offered the idea that schools can provide an alternative source of protection and nurturing in the absence of those positive family relationships.

These relationships with educators can be leveraged to achieve desired academic and behavior results. Teachers can show respect for homeless children by taking the time to comprehend their experiences, exploring different ways of assisting them, and exhibiting a combination of high expectations and accountability paired with compassion and flexibility (Eddowes & Butcher, 2000; Landsman, 2006; Lindsey & Williams, 2002).

At the district level, the homeless liaison has the responsibility of identifying and removing any barriers to a homeless child's education; this person is considered an

integral piece of the school response to homelessness (Duffield & Lovell, 2008).

Typically, homeless liaisons serve as coordinators in the larger community by working with community groups and social service agencies that provide education-related services to homeless children and youth (Hightower et al., 1997; National Center for Homeless Education, 2006). Homeless liaisons serve as the link between home and school by getting to know the families of homeless students (Funkhouser, Riley, Suh, & Lennon, 2002; Williams, 2003). The goal here is that, by helping the family, the school can help the student (Murphy & Tobin, 2011).

Finally, peer relationships warrant discussion within the context of school culture. Daniels (1995) suggested school counselors create programs to enhance awareness and respect for people with diverse backgrounds. Educating permanently-housed students about homelessness and difficulties that children in homeless situations encounter is an important strategy for providing a positive and supportive school culture (Anooshian, 2005; Tower, 1992). This strategy is critical because students who are unaware of the plight of homelessness have been known to make judgmental comments about clothing, hygiene, or living conditions of homeless students (Medcalf, 2008; Quint, 1994).

### **Summary**

Educating children and youth experiencing homelessness can, at times, seem like a formidable task. The number of school-age homeless children is staggering and increasing. This population has special implications to schools including health concerns, challenges with academic achievement, a breakdown of the family unit, social emotional concerns, and social justice and equity practices (Buckner et al., 2001; Masten

et al., 1997; National Center on Family Homeless, 2009; Obradović et al., 2009; Rafferty et al., 2004; Robertson, 1998).

Fortunately, not all research results are grim. As a matter of fact, researchers noted patterns of success among homeless children (Masten et al., 1997; Obradović et al., 2009). This success can be seen in the student's academic achievement and overall behavior. This phenomenon of success despite risks is given the term *resilience*.

Resilience is a process of adaptation in order to achieve successful outcomes despite significant risks or stressors (Felsman, 1989; Masten, 2005; Rutter, 1993; Williams et al. 2001). This process has garnered more and more attention in recent decades and is seen as a more positive and strengths-based approach; children who are homeless are not merely seen as victims but as people who have much to contribute to society. Resilience is not static and can increase or decrease depending on the situation and individual protective factors. Further, simply because a person exhibits resilience toward a threat or risk, this does not equate with this individual having immunity toward future risks—they are not invulnerable (Rutter, 1993).

The resilience framework includes stress or risk, coping, and mediating mechanisms (Garmezy, 1985). Stress mechanisms are described in this literature review and include health, academics, family breakdown, and social-emotional risk factors. Mediating mechanisms involve permanently removing or altering the risk factors and, albeit critical, are beyond the scope of this literary analysis and investigation. Protective mechanisms such as intrinsic characteristics, family dynamics, and external supports are discussed in this literature review. One of these sources of external support is the school environment.

Schools, as institutional organizations, have the opportunity to provide protective factors and, thus, foster resilience in homeless youth. The specific school structures I have identified which can promote resilience include student support, curriculum and instruction, and staff awareness and development. Student support encompasses counseling and mentoring programs (Johnson, 1992; Pawlas, 1994; Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992; Swick, 2000), college transition and vocational training (Aviles & Helfrich, 1991; Pires & Silber, 1991; Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992; Robertson, 1990), and extracurricular activities to include homework support and community service (Brooks, 1994; Eddowes, 1992; Hightower et al., 1997; Johnson, 1992; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Pawlas, 1994; Tierney et al., 2000). Curriculum and instruction should be of the highest quality and flexible enough to accommodate a transient student population (Eddowes & Butcher, 2000; Eddowes & Hranitz, 1989; Gonzalez, 1992; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Parrish et al., 2003; Ritter & Gottfried, 2002). Professional development for staff members who work closely with homeless youth is necessary in order to identify and address needs specific to this student group (Johnson, 1992; Nunez, 1994; Whitman et al., 1990).

The climate of the school is a key area, which cannot be ignored. In order to create and maintain an environment that is warm, welcoming, and promotes resilience in such a high-risk student population, a school should show that it is safe (Eddowes, 1992; Gewirtzman & Fodor, 1987), a sense of community and high personalization (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Quint, 1994), high academic expectations (Landsman, 2006; Medcalf, 2008; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1990; Powers & Jaklitsch, 1992), opportunities for meaningful participation at the school and classroom levels

(Douglass, 1996; Hallett, 2007; Wilder et al., 2003), and positive nurturing relationships with adults and peers (Anooshian, 2005; Duffield & Lovell, 2008; Williams, 2003).

Research on resilience and resilience-promoting schools provides a solid foundation for my investigation. What is missing, however, is applying Benard's (2004) conceptual framework of resilience promoting schools to population that is at highest risk: homeless youth. Furthermore, we have yet to determine which type of school setting, traditional or modified comprehensive, may be more effective in meeting students' needs. The chapter that follows describes the methodology for the study that was undertaken to address these questions.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter outlined risks of students experiencing homelessness, presented resiliency theory as a way of looking at this population, and posited Benard's work (2004) with resiliency-building schools as a way of exploring what schools are doing to build protective factors for this vulnerable student population. Because I looked at schools as social institutions, literature on school structure and climate was also reviewed and is integral to guiding the research questions.

Relationships have been explored between schools and risks and protective factors for students. However, additional research is needed in this area with regards to a homeless student population. What protective factors are present in traditional and alternative school settings for these youth? What roles do institutional structures and school climate play into these protective factors? How do youth experience these three protective factors in two distinct school environments?

This cross case analysis focused on two schools in San Diego County to understand what each educational program offers, in terms of the three protective factors, to homeless youth. This chapter begins with an explanation of case study methodology and the reasoning behind applying this approach. Next, I discuss design and participants. Data collection and analysis procedures are presented. Finally, the limitations of this investigation are presented.

### **Case Study Methodology**

Case study research methodology was chosen for this study because it focuses on understanding a phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 2009). In this investigation, my question of "What protective factors are offered at each school setting?"

is exploratory with the goal being to identify the protective factors, the school structures and climate that support and constrain the protective factors, and how students experience those protective factors in two different school sites. Theory development of this variety, prior to any data collection and analysis, is a key difference between case study research and other qualitative methods. Furthermore, constructing a preliminary theory as part of the design phase is critical (Yin, 2009). In Chapter Two, I conducted a thorough review of risks facing homeless students as well as resiliency theory. This literature led me to the conceptual framework of the protective factors necessary to reduce risk for this population. Research on institutional structures and school culture and climate was also discussed. Based on the review of literature, my initial theory was that, although both school settings would provide homeless youth with some protective factors, a school specifically designed for homeless students may have more purposeful offerings of caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

Creswell (2007) defines a case study as an in-depth investigation of a "bounded system" (i.e. an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. Yin (2009) provides a more detailed explanation:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest and data points[...], relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in the triangulation fashion[...], and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 18).

The four aspects of case study identified in the above definitions are: *bounded system, context, data sources, and theory development*. The latter has been discussed above; what follows is an elaboration of the remaining components.

*Bounded system* refers to the case being separated out for research by time, place, or some type of the physical boundaries (Creswell, 2008). The case can also have interrelated parts that are part of larger whole. Thus, the cases studied fit the criteria of both *bounded* and *systems* (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). The research questions framing this study include risks for students experiencing homelessness and the protective factors schools offer that can mitigate said risks. Therefore, data was collected from both educational settings—the schools were the units of analysis. Schools fit the definition of *bounded systems* in that they are separated by a physical boundary yet are part of larger educational systems.

Case study design allows a researcher to understand real-life phenomenon in-depth; having such an understanding requires the researcher to comprehend the investigation's context because it is highly important to understanding the phenomenon itself (Yin, 2009).

This case study was designed to be comparative. Yin (2009) explains that a comparative case study is appropriate when the same study contains more than a single case. A traditional high school and a K-12 modified comprehensive school specifically designed for students experiencing homelessness served as the context for this study. The cases were purposefully chosen for their uniqueness. I investigated the protective factors offered at each school setting. The institutional structures and climate were also important to this investigation. Understanding how the context of each school setting

influences the protective factors offered to homeless youth is critical to this case study. It is important to note that the purpose of a case is to deeply understand the specific case(s) being studied, not necessarily generalize conclusions to all cases (Stake, 2005).

Case study researchers focus on in-depth exploration of the case at hand and may choose to focus on a program, event or activity of individuals (Creswell, 2008; Stake 1995). A detailed description of the cases will emerge from multiple sources of evidence, which can include documents, archived records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2009). This information can include a history of the cases, chronology of events, organizational structures and culture, etc. (Cresswell, 2007).

In addition to the six sources of evidence, Yin (2009) describes three overriding principles of case study data collection. These principles are: 1) multiple sources of evidence coming together in a triangulating fashion to confirm already-collected data, 2) a formal case study database distinct from the final case study report, and 3) a clear chain of evidence linking questions asked, data collected, and conclusions gleaned from the data. Adhering to these three principles of data collection will result in a substantially higher-quality case study (Yin, 2009).

### **Sample and Population**

The following section outlines how data were collected. A justification for the school and participant selection criteria is discussed. Afterward, I will explain the data collection methods employed.

## Site Selection

The traditional school selected for this investigation is part of a large school district in California. More than 100,000 students in preschool through 12th grade are enrolled in the district. The district also provided schooling for over 4,000 homeless students in the 2010-11 school year (district staff, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

City High School, a traditional high school within the district, served as one of the two research sites. In the last decade, the school was divided into six thematic schools, or "schools within a school." Because each school has separate students, staff teams, policies, etc., I chose to narrow my site selection to two schools which had the same administrator, Ms. Romero. Moving forward, when I refer to "City High," I am referring only to these two smaller programs within the larger school campus. Enrollment at each of the two smaller schools is at almost 400 with a high percentage of students of color (see Table 1). According to Ms. Romero, 84 homeless students were enrolled in the 2010-2011 school year.

The comparative site selected for this investigation, Bayview School, is operated by the local County Office of Education as part of a larger alternative school district. The district enrolled 476 homeless students in 2010-11—252 of those students were enrolled at Bayview School (district staff member, personal communication, October 24, 2011). Bayview also has an ethnically diverse student population with the majority of students being Hispanic/Latino (Table 2). Of the 148 students attending Bayview, 44 are enrolled in the high school program (see Table 1).

Bayview School is a partnership between the school district and a 501c3 non-profit organization. The non-profit supplements the basic educational program with additional wraparound services. Some of these resources include an afterschool program, a therapist, a health clinic, laundry and shower services, and a math specialist.

Bayview School was chosen because I am a leader at the site and, thus, very familiar with the school. One goal of this investigation was to identify best practices about the resilience-promoting protective factors schools offer. City High School was selected because of its geographic proximity to Bayview School. This school is the designated school of residence for the various teen and family shelters in the area. Once the students have been identified as fitting the Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition of *homeless*, my hypothesis was that these two student populations would be quite similar.

**Table 1:** Student Population at Research Sites

School	Grades	Total number of Students	Total number of Homeless Students
City High School	9-12	954 <sup>1</sup>	88 <sup>2</sup>
Bayview School	9-12	44 <sup>3</sup>	44 <sup>3</sup>

1. (City High—2010-11 School Accountability Report Card)
2. (Principal Romero, personal communication March 22, 2012)
3. (School district staff member, personal communication, October 24, 2011)

**Table 2:** Race and Ethnicity Information at Research Sites

School	% Hispanic/Latino	% African American	% White	% Native American	% Asian	% of Filipino	% of Multi-racial
City High School	77.3	14.4	4.1	0.2	0.2	.8	1.8
Bayview High School <sup>2</sup>	59.7	14.5	8.1	0	0	0	17.7

1. (City High—School of Communication School 10-11 School Accountability Report Card)
2. (Bayview staff member, personal communication, October 11, 2011)

## Participant selection

**Youth.** Youth selected to participate in this investigation were students at City High School or at Bayview School. Youth participants were all in grades 9 through 12 and homeless at the time of the interview or had experienced homelessness within the academic year. Given the transitory nature of this population, and the fact that McKinney-Vento allows a student to remain enrolled for the remainder of the academic year, being homeless within the school year was sufficient for inclusion.

I used purposeful sampling to select student participants. Because all students interviewed meet the definition of *homeless*, a homogenous sampling strategy was used. Homogenous sampling occurs when the researcher samples participants based on membership in a certain subgroup with defining characteristics (Creswell, 2008). Miles & Huberman (1994) add that this type of sampling “focuses, reduces, simplifies, [and] facilitates group interview” (p. 28). Using City High’s database, Ms. Romero identified all homeless students and these were considered as potential study candidates. Once these potential participants were identified, I contacted them through a form letter (see Appendices A and B) describing the study and inviting them to participate. Final participants were selected by randomly drawing names of those who responded to the invitation. I also provided a pair of movie theater tickets (\$24 value) as incentives for student participants. I interviewed 24 youth participants—12 from each school site (Table 3). Narrowing the age of students to high-school age was purposeful as they are more likely to understand and respond to questions regarding caring relationships, high expectations, and school participation. Table 3 lists student names (pseudonyms) and their grade levels. The groups of students from each school were of varying ethnicities

and grade levels. The distribution of gender was not as even with eight City High male students participating and eight Bayview female students participating.

**Table 3:** Student Participant Names and Grade Levels

City High School Student Name	Grade Level	Bayview School Student Name	Grade Level
Alyah	12	Bryon	11
Analia	12	Catalina	10
Angel	11	Demi	11
Donovan	9	Diego	12
Isaiah	10	Gabriella	10
Landon	12	Joaquin	9
Layla	12	La'Shante	11
Malcolm	12	Mary	9
Noah	9	Molly	12
Roman	10	Paulina	11
Steven	12	Valentina	10
Yolanda	9	William	12

**Adults.** Adults selected for participation in this study included school administrators, counselors, and educators from each school site. These participants were identified in a purposeful, homogeneous sampling manner as well. Teachers included in the investigation were those who provide direct instruction to the students. Because of the difference in the number of staff members between Bayview School and City High School, and in the interest of parity with the number of participants at each research site, I interviewed six staff members at each location: one counselor, three teachers, one school administrator, and one additional staff member (Table 4). Once potential participants were identified, I sent an e-mail (see appendices C and D) describing the study inviting them to participate. The final 12 adult participants were selected based on availability for interviews.

**Table 4:** Educator Participant Names and Titles

City High School Educator Name	Title	Bayview School Educator Name	Title
Joe Boyce	Central Office Staff Member, Students in Transition Team	Barbara Glover	Teacher
Christopher Cullins	Teacher	Ricardo Jimenez	School Counselor
Arturo Gomez	School Counselor	Terry Norris	Vice-Principal
Stan Jones	Teacher	Sarah Phillips	Teacher
Karen Matthews	Teacher	Jennifer Sikes	Teacher
Mari Romero	Principal	Alicia Trujillo	Educational Liaison

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected over a four-month period between March 2012 and July 2012. All data gathered from participant resources were collected with explicit permission from the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. All electronic files created from the data collection process were saved on my laptop computer that is password-protected with two layers of encryption. All paper files created from the data collection process were stored securely in a locked safe in my home. In the sections that follow, I provide an explanation for qualitative data collection methods employed.

### **Methods**

Creswell (2008) identified observations, interviews, and analysis of documents and audiovisual materials as forms of data collection. The data collection portion of my investigation lasted five months and used three primary methods of data collection: observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. I performed classroom

observations at the school sites to look for examples of protective factors. Observations gave access to aspects of youth's experiences which they may not have otherwise disclosed. Individuals may at times unintentionally omit some of their experiences that they view as mundane or unimportant (Paterson, 1994). Youth interviews focused on the three protective factors offered to them by the school and how they experience those factors. Educators provided the school's perspective on what protective factors are offered for homeless youth. An analysis of documents (i.e. school transcripts, school policies, flyers posted on campus, etc.) was used as a way of triangulating data collected from interviews and observations.

**Observations.** Classroom observations occurred at various times throughout the day and data collection period. Classroom visits were pre-arranged with school administrators and teaching staff. They were not announced to students at the time of the visit and lasted the full class period. Classroom observations focused on school structures and climate as they relate to the three protective factors. I employed an observation protocol, with information gleaned from the literature review, in this stage of data collection (Appendix L).

**Interviews.** Interviews allow the researcher to understand the world from the participants' point of view and unfold meaning of their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I used semi-structured, in-depth interviewing to gather data from the homeless youth as well as educators at both campuses. Semi-structured interviews are "neither open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 27). While collecting data, researchers use several interview methods including focus

groups, individual interviews, and speaking with participants over the phone (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Individual interviews were used to collect data from all participants.

All interviews used a series of guided questions informed by the literature on the three protective factors and the schools' structures and climate (Appendices J and K). Interviews were conducted in person, recorded electronically, and results were professionally transcribed. In order to ensure accuracy, the researcher listened to the electronic audio files and read the transcription.

**Document analysis.** Throughout my data collection phase, I gained access to a variety of documents to triangulate data collected using the observations and interviews. Documents that proved to be beneficial in this step include academic transcripts, school and district rules and policies, flyers posted on campus, and school to home communication (i.e. school newsletters, permission slips for activities and events, etc.). A document analysis protocol is included as Appendix M.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed observation forms, interview transcripts, and document analysis forms as they were collected. Ongoing analysis enabled data sources to inform each other. The data were evaluated for content analysis using NVivo, a qualitative analysis software program, to identify salient elements and themes. The intent was to analyze the data and establish common themes, patterns, terms, or ideas that can form a deeper understanding of the issue surrounding the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The conceptual framework helped inform initial code development and new codes emerged from the data. A first cycle of In vivo and structural coding was conducted. In vivo coding is appropriate for this particular investigation because coding with the actual

words of a marginalized population, as is certainly the case with homeless youth, deepens the reader's understanding of the cultures and views. A second round of coding was necessary in order to re-organize and re-analyze data coded through the first cycle (Saldana, 2009).

Creswell (2007) considers validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to gauge the accuracy of findings "as best described by the researcher and the participants" (p. 206). Furthermore, the process of validation can be a great strength of qualitative research in that the findings made through extensive time in the data collection process and the rapport built between the researcher and the participants all add to the accuracy of the study. In order to achieve valid findings, I used triangulation and detailed writing with rich description (Creswell, 2007).

### **Limitations**

#### **Generalizability**

There is a tremendous need for research concerning resilience-promoting schools for homeless youth. However, this investigation is limited in scope and context as it examines in detail the experiences of a small sample of participants gathered from two educational institutions. The knowledge created is unique to those students, their corresponding schools, and my investigation. Generalizability to populations is not the goal; instead, case studies are intended to generalize to theory, as I mentioned earlier. While each participant's experience is unique, there are commonalities across experiences that will be useful for educators and educational leaders. There are connections between the protective factors offered at each school and the experiences of homeless youth, providing insight into structural and cultural aspects that contribute to or

hinder resilience. Finally, each unique individual story provides valuable insight into the educational experience of youth impacted by homelessness.

### **Positionality**

Because I am an administrator at Bayview School, positionality is also a limitation. This position brings a wealth of experience and context knowledge that could also introduce bias to this study and influence information Bayview School students and staff provide in their interviews. For example, I may be seen as favorable to the Bayview School program. By employing member checking and triangulation of data, I mitigate this risk, minimize bias, and allow the use of my positionality as a resource rather than an impediment.

My professional role as a school principal may be a limitation relative to the participants at Bayview School. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that there is a power asymmetry between the researcher and participants in qualitative research interviews. While this power asymmetry can certainly be the case for all participants of this investigation, youth and adult participants at Bayview School could have felt an added conflict of power during the data collection process because of my position of authority. Participants attending or working at Bayview School could have said what they thought I wanted to hear.

Throughout the data collection process, I attempt to address this concern by reflecting on the role of power. An additional attempt was made to address this power asymmetry with all Bayview participants. A fellow doctoral candidate, with no connection to Bayview students, conducted three interviews and I conducted three others. The content of those interviews was compared and found to have no significant

differences in length and/or depth of information. Educator participants were informed via recruiting documents, consent forms, and reminded prior to interviews that information gathered as part of this investigation would not be used for professional evaluation purposes. Prior to beginning the interviews, and at the time the informed consents were reviewed, I informed all respondents that I was interested their open and honest responses. I gave staff members the option to meet off-site in order to instill a sense of neutrality and all chose to meet on campus.

### **Summary**

Through the use of rigorous qualitative case study research, the purpose of this study is to uncover the protective factors available to homeless youth at a traditional school and a modified comprehensive school. Further, I considered how institutional structures and culture influence the protective factors. Finally, I was interested in gaining a better understanding how the students experience the protective factors at the schools they attend. The procedural and operational details of the study are presented and justified in this chapter. Additionally, I provided guidelines for maintaining quality research and analysis. Ultimately, Stake's (1995) affirmation that the purpose of research "is not necessarily to conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it" (p. 43) was the goal of this investigation—to identify and understand resilience-promoting factors available to homeless youth in their school environment.

Chapter Four analyzes the protective factors experienced by students at City High School. Chapter Five analyzes those at Bayview. In Chapter Six, I compare the two sites along a number of key dimensions.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CITY HIGH SCHOOL

*“And then, when you think about it, it’s just like why even bother going to school anymore, you know, but then that’s when your mind plays tricks on you, I mean it’s ‘cause I used to say, like I’m already in a bad situation, screw it, I don’t want to go to school, you know?”*

*-Noah, 9th grader*

*“If I succeed in my football or maybe in my academics, I can do something, I can maybe help my family rent a house out, rent an apartment out or buy a house even. You know, football scholarships are a lot. I can buy a house, you know or give them money, help them get on their feet a little easier and stuff.”*

*-Malcolm, 12th grader*

In this chapter, I share the stories and experiences of 12 students attending City High School. Overall, the experiences of these youth were equally divided between those having positive and negative experiences. Students who enjoyed school reported a high level of connection to City High School and its educators. On the other hand, the other half of the student participants reported getting little to no individual attention, academic or social support, and feeling frustrated and hopeless.

### **Student Experiences with Homelessness**

During interviews, most students shared a snapshot of their personal life. Details included living arrangements and the struggles they created both in and out of school. Below, I profile the personal stories of two students to provide a glimpse of into their lives and some context for their school experiences.

Students discussed that their living situation created social and educational challenges. Noah, a tenth-grader, explained that he and his family prefer that he stay at a friend’s house, rather than sleeping in the family car, during school nights—this allowed him to sleep better and have access to a warm shower. The sleeping arrangement was not

always effective because Noah felt guilty for not enduring the hardship like the rest of his family:

When I try to sleep, you know I can't, so then that affects me in the morning, about when I get to school, I sleep in, you know, I'm exhausted from staying up. Sometimes I just stay up all night praying and then I can't get to school. I'm tired. I'm sleeping in my class almost. So it's hard, it's like pointless to even spend the night at my friend's house, you know. And then, even hurts more when I take a shower, I always feel bad. I always let my little sisters and everyone in my family know that I love them, you know and that, that I'm still struggling too with them. Deep down inside me I could talk to my little sister, if she needs help, or my brother, but it's hard.

Noah, along with other students interviewed, shared that they often endure sleepless nights due either the amount of family members attempting to sleep in their various living arrangements or needing to find a different place to sleep.

One student was very candid about the impact her living situation had on her academic success. Malcolm, a twelfth-grader, explained, "my housing situation changed this year. It was like a roller coaster, like up and down and so were my grades too. My grades didn't show me really last semester. I think what was going on at home showed at school with my behavior if you understand what I mean."

The negative impact of homelessness was felt by students in realms beyond the academic. Lack of a stable home and money created barriers for students participating in extracurricular activities. Noah experienced these challenges with Army Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (AJROTC), also known as "ROTC", and football. School records showed that he had participated in the school's ROTC program in previous years. When I asked him about it, he spoke very highly about the program. He shared that he got kicked out of ROTC for not wearing his uniform.

But the only reason I didn't wear a uniform was because I was staying with my mom and I couldn't risk the uniform getting damaged, you know. There's not enough room there [in the van the family was living in], you know. Something might spill, so I left it at my friend's house and out of the randomness, every single time we had to wear our uniform, I'd forget it at my friend's house so the teacher told me, "oh, if you're not serious about it, then just get out of the program" and he put me out and I [said] "I am serious," but he just didn't understand what was going on and I thought, "I'll just join it, next year."

When Noah disclosed that he was going to reenroll in ROTC next year, I asked him about how he would resolve the uniform issue. "That depends," he said. "If I'm in a house next year or an apartment, you know, whatever, if I'm in a home, then the uniform is always going to be worn, but if I'm not, then it's going to be a lot harder to get on track, you know, because I'm not going to leave it at the van where it's a risk a chance of getting ruined, I'd rather just take the demerits and not have to pay the price of the uniform, you know, because its expensive."

Later in the interview, Noah explained that the same issue came up during football season. He explained that the uniforms and equipment were all provided by the school but students were responsible for buying their cleats. Noah's mother bought him the most affordable cleats available; he recounted they were "pretty much useless" because they provide him little ankle support and traction while playing. I asked Noah if he knew whether or not the school could help him with the cleats; he said he didn't know who to go to and ask and also added that he did not want to use his situation as a "freebie"—he wanted to feel a sense of pride knowing that his family provided his football equipment.

An analysis of the student interview data yielded many vivid stories, like those shared above, from homeless youth who shared their struggles and triumphs. The analysis

also revealed findings that could be attributed to institutional structures (i.e. campus size, curriculum, etc.) or school culture (educator disposition, academic expectations, supportive relationships, etc.). Though I disentangle structure and cultural features for the purposes of analysis, I recognize that they are often intertwined. In this chapter, I will describe what protective factors are available to homeless youth at City High School. Special attention is given to the school structure and climate with the goal of gauging if elements of either support or constrain the protective factors. How students experience the protective factors will be weaved in throughout the findings.

### **School Institutional Structures**

Components of a school's structure include campus size and student enrollment, goals set for students, support services, curriculum and instruction, professional development and policies and procedures. Each of these areas can sustain or impede the educational experience of, and influence the resilience-promoting protective factors for, homeless youth.

#### **School Size**

As previously mentioned, over 2800 students attend City High School. The student participant responses were evenly split between students who favored the physical size of the campus and those who thought it was too large. Those in favor reported liking the "feel" of a big campus and getting used to such an environment with ease. One student participant suggested that attending a large campus was preparing him to attend a large college campus.

Among those students who saw attending a large high school as a hindrance, all felt lost and lacking individual attention. Franklin, a senior at City High School provided the following explanation:

Sometimes I feel isolated. You know what I mean? I just feel like a lot is just closing up on me. You ever somewhere and go, ‘So much is going on in my life,’ like you don’t know what’s going on? You just feel like the littlest thing in such a big world or stuff like that. Sometimes I feel like that sometimes. I'm like one insect and there's a bunch around me. I just don’t know what’s going on. There's so much going on. I don’t know. Sometimes that’s how I feel.

Isaiah, a sophomore, mentioned that the drawback of attending a larger school is that “they don’t really pay as much attention to one student.” This sentiment of a lack of individualized attention came up numerous times in student interviews at City.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

City High School’s curriculum is standards-based and meets the state textbook adoption requirements. According the district’s policy, all high school students have access to A-G courses<sup>2</sup>; of the twelve students who participated in this investigation, all had at least one A-G course and the majority were enrolled in multiple. The courses are taught in a 4 x 4 block schedule model meaning that students will take a full, year-long course in one semester; this course load is balanced by taking fewer courses each semester. Online coursework is also available to students as a way to recover missing graduation credits due to previously failed courses.

The majority of students reported that they “sometimes” felt challenged academically and engaged. Advanced Placement English and Economics courses and

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<sup>2</sup> According to the University of California (UC), A-G course subject requirements are needed to enter the UC and as a freshman. Students must complete 15 college-preparatory courses drawn from the areas of history/social science, English, math, lab science, foreign language, visual and performing arts, and college preparatory electives. The California State University (CSU) has also adopted these standards ([www.ucop.edu/agguide/index.html](http://www.ucop.edu/agguide/index.html)).

math courses were seen as challenging, whereas elective courses and science courses were not seen as having the same level of rigor. Many students did not feel engaged in their classes. Alyah, a credit-deficient senior, suggested “The teachers or the staff should try to make it a little bit more fun and something for them to look forward to come into school instead of just work, work, work. They should just try to make it a little bit more fun instead of just sticking by the book. Not just so boring. Even though it’s their job, it should be a job that you like to do so you should make it fun for yourself and the students so that they can have fun in your class instead of dread coming there every day.”

Principal Romero described the same concern about student engagement in some of the classes, “I walked in to one class, and two kids were on the phone. And I could tell, a teacher can tell when the kid is hiding the phone underneath the desk. I see kids laying down or with their head down. I don’t see everybody taking notes or following the teacher’s instruction – I don’t see the kids taking notes or working.”

### **Different Schools, Different Rules**

As noted in Chapter 3, City High School is divided into six thematic schools, or "schools within a school." Each school functions as a separate program with distinct set of policies and procedures, academic focus and teams of faculty and staff. Principal Romero shared “there’s nothing that implemented as a schoolwide procedure.” She provided the example of the amount of community service hours required for graduation: “some schools have 20, some 30, we have the most—I think it’s 60.” Students exclusively attend one of the six schools; exceptions are made to accommodate challenges with student schedules.

Students who took a class at a different school within the complex reported experiencing frustration due to the inconsistency with academic and behavior policies. Layla, a senior, blames a rare “F” grade on her transcript to this issue: “It was a science class [in the other school] and so things that don’t apply here, apply over there, so if I was absent for four days out of the semester or the quarter, here it will be okay, it doesn’t affect your grade, only your citizenship. Over there, you get an F and until you go to Saturday school.”

There is overlap from the previous section of curriculum and instruction to this current one. For example, students report that instructional practices also vary from school to school. Angel, a City High junior, offered the following example: “If I were to go to [the school-focused on science], they do experiments every week and really interesting stuff versus ours, we’re just doing basic things. We burn marshmallows to see the physical and chemical reactions and just really simple things like that. They’re extracting DNA. My friends go there and they’re learning really bizarre things.”

According to students and staff, the separate school model at City High School has led to inconsistent operational and instructional practices. These inconsistencies, in turn, seem to lead to confusion and even a sense of inequity for students.

### **Goals for Students**

City High School faculty, administration, and district support staff have consensus that the main goal of the school is to support students in earning their high school diploma. Educators saw the importance of earning credits, recovering credits, and the challenge of searching for credits earned by students who are highly transitional and attend many schools. District support teacher, Mr. Joe Boyce, explained a “big part of

my job is to hunt down credits and then bring them all to one place.” Principal Romero also agreed that the main goal is “to make sure all the kids have their credits and if they don’t then we right away try to put them in different classes or in Apex, which is online learning.”

While high school graduation was seen as the common and primary goal, educator participants shared other important goals for their students. According to Principal Romero, “our goal is to get them to college.” She explained college is important to break the cycle of poverty: “I tell them, ‘There’s this cycle that happens that you get stuck in it and you don’t want to repeat it. Education is the solution for your security in the future. The more you study, the more you get paid. There’s all this research on it.’” She was the only person who mentioned higher education as an objective and there was no mention of vocational training as a school goal.

Mr. Franco, a school counselor at City High School, added that equally important to high school graduation was supporting homeless students' emotional, physical, and mental health while helping them make seamless transitions—his goal is to make them “fade in just like any other student.”

### **Student Support**

Providing for students’ basic needs, academic interventions, social and emotional support, post high school preparation, and extracurricular activities are all vital to student success and will be covered in this section. In general, all of these services exist, to some degree, at City High School. Data analysis revealed an issue of homeless students accessing some of these services—those findings will be presented at the conclusion of this section.

**Basic Needs.** There is a variety of ways that City High School supports its students with basic necessities. Mr. Franco distributes school supplies he receives from the school district. He also manages the bus passes the district provides, at no cost, to those homeless students who qualify. In order to qualify, students must live outside of a 2 1/2 mile radius of the school. Students who live within the 2 1/2 mile radius are expected to walk or provide their own transportation. The district makes exceptions for student safety reasons or health concerns. The majority of students also received free breakfast and lunch at school and expressed gratitude for this support.

**Academic support and interventions.** There is a strong correlation between student attendance and academic performance (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Attendance policies at City High School are well-defined. Students and staff have a clear understanding of the expectations and consequences regarding tardiness and attendance. The progressive disciplinary sequence of lunch detention, afterschool detention, and Saturday school was known and understood by all of those interviewed. Mr. Cullins, a teacher at City High School, raised a concern about a flaw in the policy: “If you blow off Saturday school then there’s nothing, and then some kids will figure this out and run through the whole string and then go, ‘Screw it, I came late, I didn't go to lunch, I didn't go after, I didn't go to Saturday school so they lower my citizenship to an N or a U, so what?’” While attendance interventions are clearly outlined and reasonably adhered to, academic interventions at City High are less structured and effective as perceived educators and students.

The majority of academic interventions take place at the classroom level with the teachers intervening on students struggling academically. The extent of the interventions

is that the teacher recommends his/her student to stay after school for tutoring. There were no reports of a systemwide structure for identifying students needing intervention or a mandatory homework/tutoring program. Likewise, there were no special academic interventions in place for students who were homeless. Students and faculty both described that teachers invite all students for tutoring before or after school but that is not well attended by the students—the responsibility fell on the student to take advantage of the resources. Teacher Karen Matthews shared her perspective: “I know for a fact that there’s a teacher who gives up her lunch every day to help students and, as a teacher, I stay after school. And I’m often helping people who are not my students. Or I hear from them, ‘I’ve got a paper to write for history, can you look it over for me?’ So there are teachers there who help and every teacher is supposed to. There are plenty of other people who will help if a student just pursues it.”

Seniors and students participating in an exclusive “Business Institute” (BI) have more academic interventions in place than the general student population. The business cohort students were the only group required to attend mandatory tutoring. Principal Romero, explained that mandatory attendance should be schoolwide. However, all City High School seniors who were failing their courses at the mid-semester mark were placed on a “senior failing list” and excluded from senior activities.

**Emotional support.** While a formal adult-student mentoring program does not exist, three quarters of students identified at least one adult who was a source of emotional support. Mental health services are also available to City High students on a referral basis. Although interest in participating in student counseling groups was mixed, there seemed to be a real need for this type of support for some.

The school staffed two school counselors; Ms. Ward focused on guidance counseling and the other, Mr. Franco, tended to students' social-emotional and physical well-being and assisted with student discipline. Over half of the students interviewed reported getting support from the counselor filling the latter role. Specifically, this counselor provided students positive reinforcements when their grades were high and just “checking in” in general.

While there was no evidence of formal mentoring programs at City High School, 75% of the students interviewed could identify at least one adult on campus with whom they had a close and supportive relationship—an informal mentoring relationship, of sorts. When I asked Steven, a senior, for an example of how adults have been supportive he replied: “Just by having a normal conversation that’s not about school stuff. They ask about how work is going and stuff like that.” Layla, also in her senior year at City High, agreed that talking to a teacher about issues not related to school is a sign that adults care: “Teachers not focusing on the academics but actually talking to you like a real person made me feel like teachers do care and they do want you to succeed.”

Layla recalled a time earlier in the school year when there was conflict at home and she found comfort in speaking to a City High educator with whom she could relate. “I was having a tough time and it was close to homecoming and I couldn’t go to the homecoming dance. My parents [said] ‘no you need to focus on helping us get through what we’re going through.’” Layla spoke to the teacher in charge of the student store, Ms. Jacobs. “She was telling me she went through the same thing,” Layla recounted, “her parents were really hard on her and didn’t really want her to do anything and put too much responsibility on her too.”

This notion of students finding a supportive a relationship in an adult they can relate with came up several times. Roman shared he spoke to a teacher when he missed a lot of school because his father was very ill: “My dad almost, I don’t know. He had a problem, he almost died and then [my teacher] was helping me because he said his dad died too.”

For some students, this individual attention did not exist. A few students reported not receiving “much” individual attention from their teachers. Isaiah, a sophomore, lamented, “you never really have a chance to just have a one-on-one with your teacher unless it’s something probably—most likely bad or something like that.”

With regards formal mental health support, two teachers mentioned mental health services available to students on campus. This program was made possible through a partnership between the school and a social service agency. Educators assumed they would refer any student in need to Mr. Franco.

According to students and educators, no counseling or mental health services targeting homeless students are available; when students were asked if they would be interested in such services if they existed, the response was mixed. Landon showed disinterest and commented, “To me that feels like that would be more complaining about problems. Somewhere for [students] to say how things aren’t fair and I can’t really get into any kind of woe-is-me situation.” Another student said she would not participate in such a group because she could not trust the information she shared would remain confidential. “You might tell them something that you’ve kept in for so many years and they’ll end up being mad at you one day and telling a lot of people that you’ve been through that and it’s just like, okay, well I trusted you,” said freshman Yolanda.

Other participants favored the idea of resources specifically for homeless youth. Isaiah said he would participate in a student group because, “you can share experiences and maybe [other students] can give you advice on what to do. That would really help.” Isaiah went on to explain the value getting to know classmates who are in the same situation: “That would be pretty cool to share any experience with the same person. You don’t usually see it too often. People in the same boat. It’s – well, it’s possible but you don’t see it all the time. That would be pretty cool. Because you really can’t tease somebody if you’re in the same position as them. I don’t really like getting teased and that person probably wouldn’t either. So it’d be all right to share your information with them.”

Principal Romero acknowledged that services tailored to her homeless students are needed and would be of benefit:

We have to have a center, there has to be someone in charge, to help those kids because the population’s growing much too fast. That means we would have a coordinator or a part-time counselor. But they would, for example, get their bus passes, get help with jobs, etc. And there are grants out there, like the Safe School grant that I know [another school] had. If I would have gotten that grant, I would have done the center for kids definitely with that money. I could hire someone just to help that population and help other kids.

The majority of students provided concrete examples of the mentoring-type support they gained from educators at City High School. Unfortunately, one-quarter of the students interviewed did not have a connection with such a person. Educators and some students both agreed that more could be done to provide additional emotional support to homeless students.

**Social expectations and support.** At City High, there appears to be some inconsistencies regarding behavior expectations and interventions. Different teachers respond to unwanted behavior in a variety of ways and cite a need for more support from the school administration team. Meanwhile, the school principal expects for all teachers to implement classroom interventions prior to referring students to her.

Classroom observations and interviews revealed that teachers intervene on inappropriate and unacceptable behavior in the classroom by choosing two options depending on the severity of the situation. The degree to which educators intervened on behavior varied from classroom to classroom. In some classes, students were given verbal warnings for infractions such as talking about an unrelated topic, not working on class assignments, falling asleep in class, and using cell phones during class time. In other classes, this same behavior did not elicit a response from teachers. Educators did agree that the higher-level intervention was to refer the students to the school administration team. Teacher Karen Matthews cited a need for "harsher standards" when it comes to behavior intervention: "If a kid is causing the problem we need to move them out because it's not only a message to that kid, but it's a message to all the other kids," she explained. Ms. Matthews added, "You know, the teachers can only do so much. I try very hard not to send students to the office. I try to deal with things on my own, but there's plenty of teachers who just say, get out of here. And then they get overloaded in the office and then they send the kid right back to class. And all that does is tell everybody else, you cause trouble, you get out of class for one period and then you're back the next day."

The topic of student referrals, as a means of behavior intervention, was also raised by school administrator Mari Romero. She explained that when a student gets referred to her she wants to know why they are in the office and not in the classroom. Ms. Romero requires her teachers to explain the reason for the referral and classroom interventions attempted prior to referring a student. Examples of interventions she expects to see include phone calls to parents and parent and student conferences.

Data analysis revealed some variance in classroom behavior expectations and the response to unwanted behavior. Some teachers reported a need for "harsher standards" while others allowed students to remain in class despite appearing to be completely disengaged. While the school principal reported having clear expectations of her staff regarding student behavior, these interventions do not appear to be implemented in all classrooms.

**Post high school planning.** Among students interviewed, there was a general sense that students care about the future—life after high school. Because the student participants were in various high school grade levels, they were all in different phases of planning for the future. Two seniors had plans to attend the local community college; half of the students interviewed expressed interest in going to college with no concrete plans beyond that. One 12th grade student, Landon, mentioned that he had the grades and interest in attending a four-year college but could not afford to do so. He spoke to his guidance counselor at school and staff at the group home where he lived and was out of options. During visits to City High, I observed students meeting with Ms. Ward, the guidance counselor. Posted outside her office was a map of the United States with pictures of graduating seniors and the colleges to which they had been accepted and/or

were planning to attend. Higher education institutions ranged from community colleges to public and private four-year universities. Enlisting in the military was an option for two younger students. According to the school's website, City High's ROTC program gives students on campus an opportunity develop leadership, responsibility and communication skills. While ROTC is not a military recruiting source, it does provide students a way to learn military history and structure.

City High School also offers students opportunities for vocational training. Students take courses in culinary arts and accounting. The culinary arts course gives students a real-life experience in food preparation, catering, and running a restaurant. Principal Romero also shared that students participating in this program often cater meetings held on campus. Steven, a graduating senior, credits his experience in the culinary courses with getting a job at a local sandwich shop. In addition to learning how to prepare food, Steven reported learning how to manage a food-oriented business. School records show that Steven had also taken an accounting course and done an internship at the student store.

City High provides its students avenues to explore post-high school options. Counselors avail themselves to provide guidance on college admissions. Additionally, programs like ROTC, culinary, and the student store afford students hands on opportunities to discover potential career interests while developing life-skills which could be used in any context.

**Extracurricular activities.** The twelve students interviewed were actively involved in extracurricular activities on campus. They were part of Associated Student Body (ASB), the school's dance team, and sports including baseball, football,

cheerleading and badminton. A smaller number of them reported having additional responsibilities on campus. Noah was the only student who reported any financial challenges as barriers to participating in the activities.

Community service is a strength at City High School. The school requires students to have a total of 40 hours of community service in order to graduate and 100 hours is preferred. Students give back to the school and their community by participating in campus cleanups, helping with fundraising events benefiting the homeless, and coaching martial arts at the nearby middle school. During classroom visits, I noticed flyers posted announcing community service opportunities for students. The event, coordinated by a contracted after school provider, was to feed the homeless. Steven thought these types of events were meaningful: “The feed the homeless, you feel – I don’t really know a decent word to describe it. You just feel good about yourself to do it because you’re actually helping somebody else.”

A third of the students interviewed shared that they had various responsibilities within City High School. Students were assigned duties in art classes and had job-like responsibilities for the ROTC program and the student store. Alyah described the responsibilities she had of the student store and the benefits that came along with them, “We have the students store and a part of your grade was to make sure the store was clean, make sure anything was stacked up, you basically had to keep the store running in that class and it made you feel like important like you have something to look forward to like a job.” In sum, the students at City have numerous opportunities to participate in and contribute to their school; these opportunities are meaningful and give students a chance develop skills and a sense of responsibility.

**Differential access to academic supports.** Different levels of support appear to exist for different groups of students. Students who belonged to a formal or informal student group had more resources available to them. Business Institute (BI) students are required to attend mandatory tutoring and, on a regular basis, meet with BI advisors and placed on academic contracts if not performing to expected standards. Angel, a senior, had the following perspective “Everything the school has goes to the BI students first and then if they have any extra room then they’ll take in a few of the normal students. But it’s kind of lame because it’s a little bit depressing for the other students.”

Among the homeless student population attending City High School, there is also a different level of support and intervention for one particular group of students residing at a nearby group home. Teachers could readily identify these students by name and meet regularly with an educational liaison staff at the group home. Educators have a greater level of support from group home staff; the students are required to do homework every day at their residence and their attendance is regularly monitored by the staff. Yolanda, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at City High School and former resident of the nearby group home, described that, when she lived in the group home, she didn't have any failing grades and credits the group home's required homework time and tutors. “Then after I left,” she explained, “[schoolwork] was just harder to understand, I guess. So then that’s when my grades started to fall.” Four of the twelve student participants lived at the nearby group home when they were interviewed. All four of them had a good disposition and reported having supportive relationships with educators on campus.

### **District Support for Homeless Students**

I interviewed a member of the school district's Students in Transition Team. This district-based team of educators supports all the elementary, middle, and high schools in the district. Mr. Joe Boyce has a number of schools assigned to him; City High School is one of them. Mr. Boyce collaborates with educators at City High School and also works individually with 20 City High students assigned to his caseload. He works closely with Mr. Franco to address students' basic needs such as backpacks and other school supplies, bus passes, and, on occasion, helps distribute packs of food the students can take home to their families.

Roman, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader, sees Mr. Boyce. "He'll pull me out of class and be like, 'Oh you're doing good,' and he'll give me gift cards if I'm doing good with my attendance," Roman explained. Students earn incentives based on attendance and academic performance. To ensure students are academically successful, Mr. Boyce tutors students and meets with the educational liaison staff member at the neighboring group home. Thus, district support exists, at a deeper level, for 22% of homeless City High students while the remainder may benefit from this resource indirectly.

### **Staff Awareness and Development**

In examining the data on the level of staff awareness and development related to homeless students, I found that there was no consistent manner for educators at City High School to identify their students who were experiencing homelessness and a lack professional development for classroom teachers working with homeless students. These issues will be discussed in more detail below.

All classroom teachers interviewed admitted that they could not readily identify which of their current students categorized as “homeless” under the McKinney-Vento federal definition. They all noted that there is no systemic practice to identify homeless students—either via school personnel or the student information system. Mr. Cullins, a social sciences teacher, explained “Sometimes the school counselor will share that information with me, but they share it only when I go to them and say, ‘I don't know what is going on with so-and-so.’” When asked about the student information system, Mr. Jones, who teaches science replied “We have these little markers on our student profiles that, I don't know what they all mean. They are like coded. I don't know if we even have a code for that, but if we do I don't know what it is.”

Some students self-report their homelessness to the educators with whom they regularly interact while others keep this information private. Five students reported that they had not shared their living situation with their classroom teacher; one of these five had spoken only to the school counselor about it. The remaining seven students stated that their teachers knew about their situation and found out about it from the students themselves, through the educational liaison at their group home, or because their parent or guardian had shared that information with them.

None of the teachers interviewed at City High School had any professional development in the area of homeless education. Only the counselor and principal had attended a workshop through the school district—training designed for Homeless Liaisons whose primary responsibility is to ensure compliance with the federal McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

All City High School teachers reported not knowing how to identify homeless students in a systematic manner. According to the school administration team, there is a process in place with the computerized student information system. What is lacking, however, is training for teachers on how to accomplish this task. Along with identification strategies, educators reported a need for training on how to better serve their homeless students. Topics suggested ranged from defining what student homelessness looks like to strategies to best serve students' educational, social, and emotional needs.

When asked what homeless education related topics teachers would like to see covered at staff meetings, they responded with the following: 1) defining homelessness, 2) identifying and reviewing current rosters of homeless students, 3) “symptoms or problems” associated with homelessness, 4) resources available on campus, and 5) ways to support homeless students. Karen Matthews explained that it is critical for teachers to receive the professional development because “[homeless students] will usually come to a teacher first. They won't go to the counselor. That's why we should be more knowledgeable.”

### **School Culture and Climate**

As discussed in the literature, the culture and climate of the school is just as important as the components of the academic program. Creating a positive and caring learning environment is critical for the success of this vulnerable student population (Pawlas, 1994; Swick, 2005). An analysis of the data related to school culture and climate at City High School focused on safety, student and staff attitudes, academic expectations,

roles and responsibilities and student and adult relationships. Themes in each area are reported below.

### **Safety**

Eleven out of the twelve student participants reported feeling physically and emotionally safe at City High School. Students shared there is sufficient campus supervision creating a physically safe campus. Isaiah, a sophomore, explained:

The security guards, they're always watching. They're pretty much straightforward with you. If you do something wrong then you get in trouble, but with a lot of the students here, they're pretty calm. I don't usually see anything going down. The security guards, they're always on top of things. When they suspect something's going down, they'll always be there. That's why I feel safe because there's always teachers, the security guards, they're always watching.

The sense of safety went beyond feeling physically safe; a few students described the school environment as an emotionally-safe place as well. Layla compared her home environment and her school environment: "Emotionally I feel safe [at school] because when I'm at home there's a lot of yelling and there's a lot of disputes and blaming people." Layla revealed that going to school was a way for her to escape conflict and tension at home. Her way of coping with these issues was by putting all of her energy into doing well at school.

In past years, City High School had a reputation of not being a safe campus. Students interviewed shared that image and were pleasantly surprised at the current school climate. Angel, a junior, recalls, "when I went to middle school I heard that this was bad school and I thought it was going to be bad but it actually turns out to be pretty good as far as safety is concerned." Mr. Franco, the school counselor, admits that the school didn't always have a reputation of being safe. "The first few years were really

rough years in terms of the culture here—in terms of the climate here. I think we saw a lot more gang activity. There were certainly a lot more fights and I feel like teachers had less control in classrooms. This year has been really different. I don't see that. I mean certainly they come up, it has come up this year, but I haven't seen as much.”

There are a few possible explanations for this positive turnaround. Ms. Romero reported spending more time in classrooms and increasing the effectiveness of the student intervention process. “At one point, we had a principal superintendent that said that 60 percent of your week should be in the classrooms,” Ms. Romero shared. “And that’s where changes really happened.” The other reason for the change in the climate of the school can be attributed to an improvement in the student behavior referral system: “I had to get the teachers to fill out our referral where you have to explain what happened and then you have to put all the interventions you’ve done before. Have you conferenced with the child? And they had never done that so they were saying, ‘Why do we have to fill this out?’ ‘Because I need to know if you’ve contacted the parent, have you had a conference with the student? Have you moved their seat’— all these interventions.” Ms. Romero thought those interventions had not taken place in previous years. She explained that, now that teachers are getting used to the documentation process, student discipline is more effective. Consequently, the school has more structured behavior intervention and has become safer.

### **Student Attitudes Toward School**

A disparity in students' sense of belonging and hope for the future emerged from the student interviews. A couple of students felt isolated and hopeless, whereas others reported feeling motivated to overcome their current struggles. Noah felt like the only

one at City High School who was going through this tough situation. This first-year student shared his perspective on the effect this isolation has on his desire to attend school: “When you think about it,” he explained “it’s just like why even bother going to school anymore, you know, but then that’s when your mind plays tricks on you, I mean it’s cause I used to say, like I’m already in a bad situation, screw it, I don’t want to go to school, you know?” Noah was one of the three students who could not identify an educator on campus whom he would consider as a source of social support; he was also one of the students who would be interested in the student counseling groups.

Not all students felt the same as Noah. A few of them used their current homeless situation as a motivator. For example, Malcolm, senior attending college next year, saw educational success as a way out of homelessness: “If I succeed in my football or maybe in my academics, I can do something, I can maybe help my family rent a house out, rent an apartment out or buy a house even. You know, football scholarships are a lot. I can buy a house, you know or give them money, help them get on their feet, a little easier and stuff.” In sum, whereas some homeless students felt disconnected from school, others were motivated in school, seeing it as a vehicle for personal improvement.

### **Student Perceptions about Educators**

There was also a marked disparity with regards to the perception students have about educators. Some students viewed educators as unapproachable and not caring about student success. Others regarded City High School faculty and staff as extremely supportive and even compared them to a friend or family member. Alyah, recalled a former English teacher who, “made sure she made herself available with any subject. And that helped me out a lot,” the City High senior explained, “and also being the nice,

caring person that she was made it easier to come to her. It just makes you feel comfortable, like another mom, or step mom, or I don't know, somebody close to you outside of home that you feel comfortable coming to."

On one end of the continuum, five out of twelve student participants complained that educators at City High School judged them, were difficult to talk to or unapproachable, or did not encourage them to succeed academically. Yolanda, the ninth grader, envisioned educators working with students in a different way:

They could just come up and [say], 'You can do this no matter what. I'll teach it slower if you want. You can schedule this from me and we'll have a little learning session at lunch or' – they don't really do that. They [say] 'I'm going to teach it to the whole class. The people that got A's, I'll probably teach it one more time to and everybody else, you guys can just' – yeah. It's more just like strict and they try to put up a front because they don't want – they feel that kids, because of the school, the school's name is – oh, City High. A lot of fights and a lot of this and a lot of that. So they feel that kids are going to come in here and just be disrespectful and not want to learn. But they're putting up a front so that's what we have to do too. We have to put up a front. Like, oh, since you don't care, I don't care. I'm not going to do it because you're not going to teach me that. So all around, I feel like if we just all help each other, then there'll never be a reason for any student to feel that they can't do anything.

It is important to note that Yolanda had attended a charter school that she described as "much smaller" last year as an eighth-grader. Yolanda and I had a mutually respectful interview; this notion of respect seemed to be important to her.

Teacher Karen Matthews shared her perspective on the same issue. "I don't like doing [student academic intervention meetings] myself, but the need is there." "And," she continued, "the problem that we have is that if we have a student who doesn't care, there may be other people who are teaching that student who are just saying, 'well, if they're sitting in there and they don't want to do work and they come late and they do

this why should I go to any trouble, why should I go to any trouble? Why should I take my time after school to come to a meeting?”

On the other end of the continuum, there was also a strong belief that educators on campus had a positive attitude and were there to support students academically, socially, and emotionally. Steven, a high school senior with plans to attend college after graduation, recalled how his American Literature teacher encouraged him to attend a community college. When Steven shared his doubts about attending, due to financial constraints, his teacher helped him create a budget and signed him up online. Another student, Angel, described his World Literature teacher as "empathetic." He explained that she's really concerned about how he's doing in and out of school and knows that she cares about him. Finally, Analia, a graduating senior, shared that her teachers had great admiration for her: "They motivated me, they know that I'm a hard worker, I'm dedicated and determined to keep my good grades and just go on in life."

City High School educators discussed various ways in which they were supportive of students. Ms. Matthews explained the sharing of best practices between educators when working with homeless youth: "I've had other teachers come and talk to me. We do a lot of conferring about students because we are a small school, and things come up like, 'Oh I know that she has this life and that her mother's a drug addict and she purposely left the home and isn't that great for her, but she didn't do her work on time. What should I do?' And so we confer on it, well what's the reason? Did you talk to the people at the group home; let's figure this out."

Principal Romero discussed the outreach she and her administration team do so that students do not feel isolated and take advantage of resources at the school, "The

more the teachers encourage them to get help for anything, I think the kids are not as embarrassed of their situation. One of the things that we shared a lot is that, ‘You’re not the only one. We have 61 kids, we have 50 – this happens. It’s unfortunate, people are losing their jobs. Your job right now is to really do well in school, to be able to graduate.’ But I think all teachers would go even an extra mile just to help them.” Furthermore, a number of educators made personal contributions in order to support their homeless students. City High educators, both faculty and administration, contribute their own money to purchase bus passes, food, and clothing for their students.

### **Academic Expectations**

While there are examples of some educators having high expectations for students, the majority of the evidence collected showed a culture of low expectations for students. Five out of the twelve student participants gave me examples of one or two teachers holding them to a higher standard by pushing them to write or speak better and, overall, try their best. For example, Landon, disclosed that he believes his American Literature teacher holds him to high standards: “She’s more consistent about checking up about college ‘Are you applying?’ Are you applying yourself?’ ‘Are you making sure you’re making deadlines?’ She’s pretty adamant about me not only passing high school, but having a future.”

On the contrary, a major theme that emerged from the data was a culture of low expectations. Eleven out of twelve students described a school culture lacking interventions or consequences when students performed poorly in their schoolwork. Students shared that the only real consequence if they didn't do well in school is that they failed their courses—“basically, it's on the student,” Layla explained, “If they really want

to succeed, then they can do it because if I wanted to succeed, I can succeed." The sense of "It's up to you" was conveyed time and time again by the students interviewed.

### **Student-Adult Relationships**

City High School students viewed the school administration team in a favorable manner. Student participants interviewed knew who the members of the administration team were and trusted them when they needed some type of support. When students were asked who, on campus, they could or would turn to for non-academic needs (i.e. concerns about bus passes, health care, food, housing, etc.), two-thirds of them responded that they would speak to Mr. Franco. On the day I interviewed her, Ms. Romero recalled an earlier conversation with one of her graduating seniors:

I was walking into the school and I saw one of my students and I said, "Hi, how are you doing? How's it going? Are you ready to graduate?" And she looked to me and said, "I have a problem." I pulled her into the office and she told me she is pregnant and she wants to move out. And so I said, "Why do you want to move out?" "Because I haven't talked to my parents." And I gave her all these things that she should do first. Then I said, "And if you're ready to move out then we do have that information. Your counselors have that information. Every counselor has it."

The majority of students interviewed had examples of supportive relationships with at least one faculty member on campus. The overriding theme in this area is that teachers took an interest in students' lives. Supportive teachers help students with their academic needs. They would not allow them to "slip through the cracks" and were always available to tutor. High academic expectations were also regarded by students as a support mechanism. Isaiah, a sophomore, recalled the motivation he received from his English teacher, Ms. Lantzam:

There was a time in English class when we were doing poetry. I'm not really much of a poetry guy. I didn't really understand it. But, every day I

would try—I would focus. And Ms. Lantzman offered to meet with me after school and help me with it. At first, my stuff would come out a little shaky but then, as I worked with her every day, I would get a little better and just one day, I came out with this really good poem. And she said “Isaiah, you have excelled.” And that made me feel good.

According to students, supportive adults took an interest in students beyond academics. Students appreciated educators talking to them like “real people about real things.” One third of the students received help from their instructors when they were going through a rough time with their parents, peers, or having health concerns. One student shared that educators sharing their life stories and what they've been through gave her a new-found respect. “It's like they actually understand. You can relate a lot to what they say. So I would probably go to them and see if they sort of relate,” said freshman Yolanda. One student, Analia, expressed that she felt supported by her English teacher because:

She took an interest in my situation. She's really cool. She also knows the things about my group home, stuff like that and things we do. She's very understanding of those things and she supports us a lot. She makes sure that we're on the right path and she usually talk to us to see what's going on and then she listens to us. She's a really close friend.

Mr. Cullins, a social science teacher, took an interest in a student who was having an especially difficult time completing her senior project—a prerequisite to high school graduation. His strategy was to show her he cared about her and simply asked what was bothering her. Mr. Cullins recalled:

So one day we were working and I said to her “What is wrong? What is wrong?” and she said, “I'm hungry.” And it was that simple, I said, “Just wait here,” and I go over the student store and get her a bowl of soup and a Gatorade and I said, “OK, eat, because you're not getting anything done and you have to present next week, and hold on.” I ran over a bag of Goldfish, so she had a bag of Goldfish, a bowl of soup and a Gatorade and after that, no more problems and it was something we fixed for like

\$2.50—“I'm hungry, and you know what I'm thinking about? Food!” That kid has faced failure her whole life and people looking down their nose at her, talking to her in a certain tone of voice.

When present, these student-teacher relationships provide a strong source of academic, social, and emotional support. While the type of support received varied by student, it all seemed to be important to and appreciated by the students.

### **Peer Relationships**

One third of the students interviewed had close friends and saw them as a primary source of support on campus. These caring relationships helped students navigate difficult times with their homeless situations and issues that stemmed from homelessness. Noah shared the following with obvious pride: “All my friends that I’ve told, always support me, you know, I go [to their house] for dinner. They try to invite my mom over if she’s not busy. They, the family, will invite me to sleep at their house and will take me out to go get some clothes.”

On the other hand, two students reported not sharing information about their homelessness with their close friends. “I keep that kind of personal because then I get teased and I feel bad. That's not what I want,” explained tenth-grader Isaiah. It is important to note that the other eight students who reported not having close friends on campus, described having other sources of support. Some students had close relationships with siblings or other family members; others reported having close friends who went to other schools.

### **School Structural Changes and the Effect on School Culture**

Because the interviews were conducted at the end of the school year, many staff members were thinking ahead to the next school year. The faculty and staff at City High

School faced significant changes to its school structure. These changes, in turn, negatively affected the climate on campus. Ms. Matthews, the veteran English teacher, shared her concerns about the upcoming changes:

We have a Dean of students this year but were not going to have one next year. The principal's in charge of two schools; how do you handle discipline? You know, the teachers can only do so much. We're still going to have one principal for both schools. And this will be our third principal in three years because the current one is leaving. Yeah, it's getting tougher and tougher to be here. I mean there are a lot of teachers who say maybe it's time to just go back to the comprehensive high school [model] again. There are plenty of people here who found out they may be losing their jobs three months ago. How much do you want to work, how hard do you want to deal with that rotten kid in your class if you think you're not coming back? So this really took its toll on our school this year.

According to Ms. Matthews, the upcoming changes were already affecting students. "The students feel it's kind of a free for all. And I think that played out in the grades too. Because they don't feel like anybody cares." To illustrate the negative effect, Ms. Matthews went on to explain that she had noticed an increase of students failing her class and a decrease in summer school registration.

School principal Ms. Romero shared some insight on the upcoming changes, "I think with the recent turmoil what's happening with our schools and for your knowledge, we are divided into 6 schools and next year it's going to be 5 schools, and critical things that are happening that I think could impact our school and the kids understanding of what's happening and whether it's equitable or not from one school to another school." These structural changes, and the potential impact, were only mentioned by City High educators.

## Summary

There are components of City High school's institutional structure and culture that appear to foster resilience in some of its homeless students. Other facets of the school fall short of providing an optimal school environment for these youth. From an organizational perspective, City High has a number of areas that are resilience-promoting. Various curricular options, including college prep courses, credit recovery, and vocational training courses provide ample options and student participants were taking advantage of all them. There is also a wide variety of extracurricular activities available; however, barriers do exist that limit student participation.

The school has some structural areas that pose some obstacles in serving homeless students. In this regard, the most significant finding is that educators do not have the capacity to identify and serve the needs of a homeless student population. Although district support is present, a focus on a small number of individual students leaves City High educators with little central office support in meeting the diverse needs of a large group of homeless students.

Concerning the school culture, students have a general impression they attend a very safe campus yet are "on their own" if they want to be academically successful. Students belonging to certain groups have more school resources at their disposal. While some students not belonging to these groups have managed to make personal connections with educators and report a marked level of support, there are others who did not have any relationships with educators and reported feeling alone and experiencing challenges in school.

## CHAPTER FIVE: BAYVIEW SCHOOL

*“My mom and I, we didn’t know where to go, so my mom asked Ms. Trujillo. Well, I asked Ms. Trujillo, and she helped us look up cheap hotels and stuff. When she found one, we went over there for a little bit, for a couple of weeks.”*  
Valentina, 10th grader

*“You know that everybody here is in the same situation that you are. Everybody’s in the same situation so you don’t feel judged or you don’t feel different. It’s like that. I don’t know. You feel good.”*  
Diego, 12th grader

*“When I came here two years ago I was feeling like my future was not going to be too bright. As soon as I got here everybody was behind me saying, ‘You can do it. You’re destined to do great things.’ It’s just like a huge family and a support team. I’m glad that I was able to be here.”*  
Molly 12th grade

Chapter Five presents findings on the second research site, Bayview School.

Results will be provided in a similar fashion to the previous chapter—the school site’s institutional structure and climate and culture, as they relate to the resilience-promoting protective factors, will be discussed. Generally speaking, Bayview students experience a supportive and individualized learning environment. The school’s structure allows for a holistic approach to educating homeless youth. On the other hand, the small school environment limits course offerings and opportunities for student contribution and participation.

### **Student Experiences with Homelessness**

As was the case in the previous chapter, prior to presenting and analyzing students' educational experiences, some background information on their unique situations will be shared. These two students’ stories provide a glimpse into their lives and context for their school experiences. The stories are meant to profile two students and are not necessarily representative of the whole student sample.

Demi is an 11<sup>th</sup> grade student at Bayview. She shared the struggles she experienced as a high school student living in poverty, “I tried trying out for the cheerleading at Monte Vista, but I couldn’t afford the stuff [uniforms, gear, etc.]. I was there for the whole week that they were doing the routine, and I had the chance to try out, but they told me that it cost a lot of money for the stuff so I just dropped out.” When I asked her if she spoke to anyone at the school about any financial support she replied, “They said I could make payments, but I didn’t have money to make payments.” With a tone of self-consolation, Demi said it was probably better that she could not participate because she would not have been able to attend all the games and her parent also needed her to take care of her three younger brothers and sisters.

William is credit-deficient senior. He shared his story about dropping out of high school as a sophomore in Northern California and how he came to enroll at Bayview. The decision to drop out resulted from conflict within his family: “I guess I stopped going because I had trouble dealing with my aunt and apparently, she couldn’t handle me because of the trouble I was getting into so she just sent me back to my mom in Tijuana.” William confided in me that he was involved in drug use and gangs. “When I stopped going to school,” he continued, “my mom didn’t want me enrolled in school anymore because she thought I would get in trouble again so I worked a lot. I was begging like four months; I really wanted to go back to school and learn. I wanted so bad to just go back to school and get my high school diploma and go to college but she didn’t want me to do that.” William explained that he continued to “beg” his mom for about a year. “Then one day,” he shared “I don’t know why but we came over here [to the United States] and we stayed at a shelter for two days.” Because the family shelter in which

they were staying had a policy that school-age children and youth must be enrolled in school, William was enrolled at Bayview. Through a social service agency, William's mother learned about the emergency teen shelter in town and they made the decision that he would stay there and continue attending school.

Although each student's experiences are unique, the stories of Demi and William have some similarities to other Bayview students. For example, half of the students interviewed attended another high school prior to enrolling at Bayview. At the time of the interview, William lived at a group home and was legally considered an unaccompanied minor; this was also the case for one other participant. The rest, like Demi, lived with at least one parent or guardian.

Similar to the previous chapter, the data analysis revealed stories of struggle and hope for homeless high school students. The analysis also yielded examples of resilience-promoting protective factors for these youth and are separated as structural or cultural components.

### **School Institutional Structures**

Much like in the previous chapter, campus size, curriculum and instruction, goals set for students, support services, and professional development are discussed as school structural components. Bayview's structure is set up in a way that creates a supportive environment for students. The small school setting means more individualized attention where educators focus on tending to students' most basic needs as initial priority and then progress to address students' educational, social, and emotional growth. According to Bayview educators, while they are all aware of the situations their students face, more training is needed in topics closely related to homeless education.

## **School Size**

Bayview School is much smaller than a traditional high school. The entire campus operates in a 10,000 square-foot building with seven classrooms and serves students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Two of those classrooms are dedicated to the high school program. The 44 high school students are assigned to one classroom as a homeroom but switch between the two classrooms for their courses. Ms. Jennifer Sikes teaches social sciences and language arts while her team teacher, Ms. Barbara Glover, teaches math and science.

Student and educator participants described benefits of the small campus. Ms. Sikes explained that the small school environment makes establishing and maintaining relationships with students and educators possible, “because no matter how dedicated your staff is, there’s only a certain amount of energy and time that people have and this job, for everybody who works here, this job is extremely, emotionally-draining.” Similarly, students reported that they get to know their teachers and have increased communication with them, educators pay more attention to the students, and, according to William, “students get less in trouble because you kind of, like, can't ditch or nothing like that. They would catch you really fast.” Bayview’s smaller setting has an impact on curriculum and instruction, student goals, and student support; these areas will be discussed next.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

Due to its small number of high school students, Bayview does not offer all the course offerings a traditional school would offer a larger student body. Students interested in attending a four-year university take required coursework at neighboring

community colleges through a dual enrollment program. On the other hand, a special focus on students earning credits needed for high school graduation does exist.

Bayview School offers the typical sequence of courses in English/language arts, math, science (without labs), social sciences, and electives. The school utilizes state-adopted curriculum for its core classes. A variety of electives are taught by the two high school teachers; at times these teachers will invite guest instructors from the community to facilitate specialized elective courses such as choir and theater. Currently, there are no foreign language courses taught. While the courses are not A-G approved, the school district under which Bayview operates is accredited through the Western Association of schools and colleges (WASC).

Since courses and Bayview are not A-G approved, students do not have the option of applying to a California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) institution through the traditional high school student route. Instead, students interested in transitioning directly from Bayview to a UC or CSU campus, take lab science and foreign language courses through a dual enrollment program with local community colleges. Students who successfully complete these courses at the community college, and the remainder of the courses at Bayview, are granted a waiver for the A-G course requirements. According to Bayview's guidance counselor, six 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders participated in the dual enrollment program; one high school graduate applied for and was granted the waiver last school year.

The school ensures that students are making progress towards high school graduation. Ms. Trujillo, Bayview's educational liaison, explained "the majority of students who enroll are credit deficient." According to teacher Ms. Glover, generally,

students are credit deficient, “not only because they have been out of school, but maybe they were in school and not academically successful.” Ms. Trujillo assured me that “Bayview does really good job of supporting them, getting them where they need to go and catching up on credits.” During the summer grading period, students who are in credit deficient take individualized courses to recover those credits. Student transcripts show that tenth-graders take a California high school exit exam (CAHSEE) prep course in the winter grading period.

Eleven out of twelve students reported being challenged academically at Bayview and educators at the school share that sentiment. Teacher Jennifer Sikes said, “they are being asked to do a lot of critical thinking that’s sophisticated in all their subject areas. They’re being asked to take more responsibility for their learning and not expecting to just sit passively and have information poured into them.” Ms. Sikes’ team teacher, Ms. Glover, had a similar take, “I would say absolutely yes. We do challenge students academically. We take the state-mandated adopted curriculum and then we try to basically adapt it as much as possible to our students’ needs, to the different learning modalities, and then really look for inventive ways to connect with students that may not have been connecting with school. We want to get them engaged in the learning process and to get them engaged with their classmates.” Valentina, a tenth-grader, shared that she felt she pushed academically “I am being prepared for college now. They push you to get good grades, make sure that you’re on top of your school work, and that you turn everything in on time.”

## Goals for Students

Educators described the four main goals they have for their Bayview students. The initial goal is to address the students' basic needs. Once those needs are addressed, educators focus on providing a rigorous instructional program and empowering students to make healthy choices. Finally, educators are interested in developing students' appropriate social skills.

Tending to students' basic needs was reportedly a major priority at the school. According to educators, the school ensures that students have a stable and safe place to live so they can better focus on their education. Teacher Barbara Glover agreed that tending to students' basic needs is important: "One of the major goals is making sure that the student's immediate needs are being met, whether that is getting them into a stable housing situation with their parent, or if they are an unaccompanied minor, some other type of housing situation. I think that's first, it's to stabilize that, so they can attend school on a regular basis. I think that is the most immediate need for the school, for the student to be able to even come to school." Bayview staff member, Alicia Trujillo, is an educational liaison whose focus is to work closely with students' parents and other family members to better support their children's educational experience. "My goal," Ms. Trujillo explained, "is to make sure each student is here and ready to learn, not just physically but emotionally. Optimally, they will be ready to learn and use their education to break the cycle of homelessness."

All educators had consensus that providing a solid academic program was a major goal at Bayview. Part of this focus is a successful transition upon entry to and exit from Bayview School. Educators discussed stabilizing students academically when they first

come through the door (getting a better understanding of their school history and credits earned). Ms. Glover shared her perspective on the topic, “Identifying where a student is academically is key. Are they on grade level with their coursework, with their credits, with their ability levels? Some students, they may be credit-deficient, not only because they've been out of school, but maybe they were in school, but they were failing classes.” Teacher Sarah Phillips shared that, “instilling in students the belief that they can learn” is one of her first goals; she went on to explain that this belief in themselves is something they can carry with them for the rest of their lives. For students who stay at the program short-term, a successful transition to the next school is highly desired. Barbara Glover explained, “I want to make sure, and I think my colleagues want to make sure, that if for some reason tomorrow one of our students doesn't show up and they end up in another school, I don't want them floundering there. I want them to be as well prepared as the student that they're sitting next to.”

For those students who attend Bayview on a long term basis, high school graduation and a successful transition to a higher education institution is the goal. Bayview’s vice-principal, Terri Norris, explained that providing students “rigorous academics and keeping them at grade level, teaching them the same level of academics that they would be learning in any traditional high school, preparing them for the high school exit exam and graduation,” are the academic goals of the school. Accordingly, Jennifer Sikes, Ms. Glover’s team teacher, reported that the goals of the school, “are to have the students graduate and be prepared for community college and possibly a four year university if they... if that’s something that they’ve identified with our counseling staff as a realistic goal for them.” While tending to the basic needs and providing a

rigorous instructional program were identified as the main goals, Bayview educators shared other goals they had for their students.

Empowering students to make healthy choices and building social skills were two objectives that were brought up by Bayview educators. Ms. Trujillo explained, “When they're here, my goal is to give them as much...as many as options as possible so that they can take them with them when they go, so they can make smart healthy choices, not to not make mistakes, because everybody makes mistakes, they're kids, they have to learn, but that they're making healthy choices and doing what's best for them so they don't become homeless themselves as adults.” With regards to building social skills, Ms. Norris commented, “I think we spend a good amount of focus on teaching [students] to get along with different people from different backgrounds and teaching tolerance or empathy for other people.”

While there was some variance in responses to student goals, a strong pattern of addressing basic human needs and providing a rigorous education was evident. Themes surrounding fostering appropriate decision-making and developing social skills were present but not strong. The four goals educators have for Bayview students are achieved mainly through structural components found in the area of student support.

### **Student Support**

The largest and most comprehensive structural component at Bayview focuses on student support. The programs and people in place provide students academic, social, and emotional support. Programs that need further development include those that prepare students to transition to a four-year college or the workforce, and those that provide students an opportunity to contribute and/or participate in a meaningful way.

**Academic support and interventions.** The most salient theme in this category was the school's mandatory Academic Support program (AS). Ten of the twelve students interviewed spoke about Academic Support when asked, "What happens if you don't do your best in your school work?" Demi, a Bayview junior, explained "academic support is a class you go to from 2:00 to 3:00 and you sit there and they give you work. They give you a printout of all the missing assignments and the assignments that have your grades. And any missing assignment they give to you, and then they give you a week to do it. Then they help you with it and some kids try to leave class, I used to do that. You cannot leave because there's people guarding the [gate], and if you leave you can either get suspended or you get a warning, and then further consequences." Students are required to stay for the intervention program if they have four or more missing assignments or any grade is lower than a "C". Molly, a graduating senior talked about the benefit of having the school intervention, "It's really good because when I first got here I was in academic support all the time. Once I got used to the routine here of doing your work, turning it in on time—ever since the first month that I was here I didn't have to go back because I was always turning in my work."

Bayview educators also spoke favorably about the academic intervention and message students get through Academic Support. Ms. Jennifer Sikes explained, "that's a big piece of the program here; that idea that it's not okay for you to just get an F or even a D. That's just not good enough." Mr. Ricardo Jimenez, one of Bayview's counselors echoed the same idea, "[as a student], you will have to try to fail around here because there is so much support, and it's done in a kind manner. It isn't done as a punishment or

you're in detention because you didn't do the work. No, it's done in a concerned, caring manner where the kids go in there and get help.”

Similarly, students discussed the academic support they receive at Bayview in the form of counseling, credit recovery, and tutoring. Students described receiving guidance counseling from, Ms. Law, one of the school counselors. Thus, students seemed more aware of the importance of course credits. Mary informed me that Ms. Law “is a counselor also but talks more about credits and how to prepare for college and how many credits I need to graduate.” One third of the students interviewed explained that, if they did not do well then they ran the risk of failing their classes and not earning credits.

Another third of the students discussed the academic support they received from volunteer tutors. Teacher Barbara Glover talked about the tutoring support, “We do have a large network of volunteer tutors; we have tutors who have expertise in physics, who have expertise in mathematics. We have former mathematics professors. We can enlist their help to work one-on-one with our students to provide them the support when they're struggling academically.” From the student’s perspective, this individual support is also important. Mary recalled the benefit of working with a tutor, “my tutor teaches me math like multiplication [and] she times us and that was the best thing because I was really focused in math because I really wanted to know it. I knew my 8s, my 7s, my 6, my 4s, and my 9s. She helped me and I was like the top one to finish them first.”

**Emotional support.** Providing students emotional support services is of major importance to Bayview educators. As such, the school provides whole class community building sessions, individual therapy with the school’s therapist or a referral to partnering counseling agencies.

Bayview has a full-time art therapist on staff, Ms. Linda, who sees students on an individual basis for ongoing social emotional concerns. Additionally, Ms. Linda will participate in classrooms as a guest instructor and lead Community Building. Ms. Phillips provided some details on what takes place during Community Building when she partners with Ms. Linda, “We've done a few sessions where they do an art project mapping out their life and where they have been and stayed and then they can share out, and so there have been times where it has been pretty intense and people are writing about the shelter [they live in] and [having to go] back to that one.” According to Ms. Phillips, the aim of Community Building is to develop a sense of cohesion and respect among classmates. Mary explained some of the benefits she gets from Community Building, “We express really clearly and we communicate with our classmates and have lots of fun.” She said this activity helps her at school because “You know you can trust people to talk to you honestly and with respect.”

In addition to her Community Building work with whole classes, Ms. Linda also sees students on an ongoing basis for individual art-based therapy. Paulina confided that she met with Ms. Linda for therapy:

I would visit her like every week. She helps out a lot because she listens to things that...if you have problems anywhere like in school, at home or if something went wrong for the day. She would just listen to you and she'll say “You use whatever you've got right here to show what you're feeling.” While you're doing what you're doing, if you're painting, sketching, making little sculpture, she'll say, “Talk to me. What's been going on? What's new?” Things like that and she'll listen to you. But at the same time like you're just like doing something to express what you're feeling but explaining at the same time. She's pretty cool.

According to Mr. Jimenez, there is a great need for emotional support services at

Bayview. Mr. Jimenez noted that 52 of the 145 currently-enrolled students are receiving

some sort of counseling. This number includes students seeing Bayview's art therapist and counselors from outside agencies.

Bayview has established a culture that values mentoring. According to students and staff, a variety of informal mentoring relationships exist, staff member to staff member, staff member to student, and student to student. "It's pretty neat," explains Ms. Trujillo, "the students feel that we believe in them and can assist them in being successful. Not do it for them, because I think that serves to break down the relationship, but do it together and be there with them while they figure it out." Mr. Jimenez observes teachers "just being role models and being available to every single kid that wants a little bit of help. I can't say... One teacher, say this one, really sticks out with this kid because I see everyone trying to be there for everybody."

Molly, the graduating senior, identified two people that she had an informal mentoring relationship with and shared that she thought of herself as a mentor to younger Bayview students. Molly named a school administrator and a support staff member as "major mentors." She also proudly explained that she was a role model to her younger peers, "I know that some of the younger students would always come up to me. The ones in high school would come to me and ask me for advice or ask me for help whenever they needed it. I kind of served as a mentor a little bit." She credited her good grades and "being mature" as the reason why students saw her as a role model.

**Social support.** Bayview's staff operates the school with the general philosophy of removing obstacles that are in way of academic success. Ms. Norris explained, "We do what we can to alleviate those barriers in terms of hunger, lack of clothing, or things like that. One of the things that we do is, not only tell the student we expect them to do

their best work, but find out why they're not doing their best work and try to take away those barriers.” Because Bayview is an alternative school designed for students who are experiencing homelessness, the program is designed to address the specific needs of this population. The school employs a higher ratio of staff to students, which is not common among traditional school settings. In this manner, the school offers its students the services and support necessary to be academically successful.

Behavior issues at Bayview are mitigated by the high level of individualized attention students receive. Educators discussed the steps they take and the school structure which makes it possible to get to know students individually and intervene on inappropriate student behavior. Students also shared their experiences of attending a school with this level of support.

Bayview educator, Sarah Phillips, described the steps she takes to get to know her students, “The first day they come in, they fill out a questionnaire that has a lot of questions like, ‘What should I know about you?’, ‘What are things you really like?’, ‘What are things that have bugged you about teachers before?’, ‘Tell me about your past experiences in school’, ‘What do you really dislike?’, and so I go through and I read those, and then they ask me questions; whatever they want to ask.” Ms. Phillips went on to explain that getting to know her students in this manner, and from their first day of attendance, helps her identify a concern and intervene quicker. “Generally,” she explained, “if I see something within the first week for sure, I will pull them and have a heart-to-heart to find out what's going on so that when they know somebody is paying attention and there's a concern, it's not just blown off. So I try and figure out why, what's happening and then if it's really that they're needing some one-on-one or TLC.” Similarly,

Mr. Jimenez made the observation that, when behavior issues arise and in-class behavior management techniques are not effective, teachers will “do a little one-on-one talk with them, and they ask them simple questions like, Did you sleep? Did you eat? Is there anything that we need to know about?”

Bayview's school structure makes it conducive to provide individualized support to its students. Counselor Alicia Trujillo shared that, "Because the school is so small and there's 44 high school students, there are, at any given time for five adults were personally involved in [students'] academics. There are a lot of people holding each student accountable. It's difficult, I think, to get away with anything here. I mean that in a good way, it's difficult to pass unnoticed." Vice Principal Terry Norris shared the same sentiment,

Because we're so small, we know the students. We know just from observing what's normal behavior and what's not normal behavior for a particular student. We know if somebody is usually really loud and boisterous at recess, and now they're sitting on a bench and not talking to anybody, that's unusual. Likewise, the other way around, if they usually sit at the table and talk to one friend and today, they're just being loud and boisterous, again, there's something different. What's going on that's making them behave differently?

If initial behavior intervention strategies are not effective, Bayview takes an even more individualized approach. “If the behavior continues,” explained Mr. Jimenez, “then usually we find someone that student has made a contact with, has made a connection with on another level, on a more personal level maybe. I'm not saying that the teachers or the counselors get personal in a "friend" way, it's just that the conversation could go deeper with someone that's sure to get at the issue.” Educators who are available to meet

with the students include the two school counselors, two school administrators, the school therapist, special education teacher, and the educational liaison.

Bayview educators expressed that the purpose of intervening on student behavior is solution oriented. Jennifer Sikes revealed:

There's always some level of intervention depending on what kind of activity it is and how disruptive it is to the rest of the group and what's going on at that moment. I can go to the counselors; serious things are handled by the administration, and of course, but I think the goal is always to help the student not do it again. I feel like things are not punitive around here. Things are more, in terms of problem solving. There's a real problem-solving approach, "Okay, if you weren't having a problem you'd be doing this, you'd be doing better with this and so what is the problem?"

In this area, classroom staff and administration are in agreement. Vice-principal Terry Norris explained the course of action taken when a student is not behaving properly. "The first step," she said "is not necessarily disciplinary. It's more counseling to find out why a student is behaving this particular way. If they continue to behave inappropriately, then there are consequences, because we expect our students, in order to be productive members of society, they need to understand how to behave appropriately."

In addition to the immediate response to behavior concerns, select Bayview educators convene as a team to discuss more in-depth student concerns. Ms. Trujillo provided more detail on the group: "The Comprehensive Student Assistance Team (CSAT) is comprised of the two counselors, the principal, the vice principal, the school therapist, the resource teacher, and myself. We meet weekly to discuss caseloads of students. Usually, it's team members who are bringing up students; sometimes teachers refer [a student's case]. We try to develop a plan of action and intervention to support

that student.” Ms. Trujillo, along with other educators, noted that if repeated counseling interventions are not effective, then disciplinary consequences can and do take place.

Students do notice and express appreciation for the support. Diego, a Bayview 11<sup>th</sup> grader recounted, “Sometimes I remember I had some bad days and they asked me ‘hey what’s going on, are you having some trouble, problems, or do you want to talk to me?’ They’re open with you. If they see you right now, if you’re in a bad mood or you feel bad or they see that you’re acting up, they want to talk to you right away. They don’t wait for another moment. They are there for you.” La’Shante shared her perspective on behavior intervention, “I think the first step is to have a meeting with the principal and the counselor, then your parents and you to figure out what’s going on and how you can make it better, and if it keeps continuing on then there are harsher consequences.” A majority of students identified both the counseling and disciplinary approaches to behavior intervention.

Similarly, most students (11 of 12) credited the school with tending to their basic needs. The school has the infrastructure to provide students school supplies, clothing, toiletries, health care, break, snack and lunch every school day, dinners twice a week, and assistance with finding housing. Educators explained that addressing students' basic needs is an important initial focus at Bayview. “If they're not being addressed,” declared Ms. Norris, “then there's something that needs to be done; it's difficult for students to focus on their education, or follow directions or even just listening to a lecture. Their mind is on something else, which are the basic needs. Are they hungry? Did they sleep well last night? Was it too cold? Did their parents fight, etc.” Because not addressing those basic needs creates a barrier to learning, Ms. Glover described her approach with

every newly-enrolled student, “When a student comes to me initially, I’ll ask them, ‘Do you have any immediate needs for toiletries or something like that?’ And if they need help with clothing, school supplies, toiletries, anything like that, we have a dedicated person [on staff] who handles those requests. ‘Miss Nicole is the person that we should see, let me know if you need anything, we can get it,’ or I will just go to Miss Nicole and let her know I have a new student, they might need something and she’ll check in with them.”

The school also has a system for students to get clothing and supplies on an ongoing basis—“Shopping Day.” Joaquin, a Bayview freshman, explained shopping day, “It’s done every seven weeks and you get shoes, you get jeans, socks, a toothbrush, toothpaste. You get shampoo, body wash, everything you need. You get clothes, everything, even belts. That’s why you don’t have to worry when you’re homeless because you have all that.” Like Joaquin, most students interviewed relayed that getting these supplies at no-cost, and on an ongoing basis, was a big help to them and/or their families.

One hundred percent of Bayview students are eligible for free breakfast and lunch through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In addition to students receiving these meals, community volunteers provide dinner to students and their families on Mondays and Fridays. Educators said one of the many benefits of this program is that they have an opportunity to interact with students' families while the parents or guardians enjoy a substantial meal.

**Post high school.** While programs that prepare students for life after school exist at Bayview, the one focused on transitioning graduates to higher education is more

structured than the opportunities available for vocational training. Students and staff alike talked highly about the school's College Careers and Beyond (CCB) program. CCB offered student college exploration activities and culminated in a college trip. Molly, a Bayview senior, recalled she "looked a lot into universities, like what kind of classes and subjects we would have to take in order to go straight into a four-year university or we also looked at the junior colleges and we were able to take a trip to some of the colleges up north, and I saw my dream college, UCLA. There was just a lot of stuff looking into the future as college students." Educators like Ms. Sikes talked about CCB with a shared sense of importance, "Taking the kids on a college trip, like they did last year, is really profound for our kids and that expectation that at some point they will be at the four-year schools and they'll be getting a college degree." Mary, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader, shared that one of the school counselors teaches workshops on college preparation, course requirements, scholarships, etc. The school's efforts seem to have an influence on the student body—75% of students interviewed shared they were interested in attending college after high school graduation.

Opportunities for students to gain vocational training are not as readily available at Bayview. The school does not offer any classes specifically designed to prepare students for the workforce. As part of Bayview's After School Program, a business club operates. In Business Enterprises (BE), students learned how to do embroidery on various textiles and design jewelry. Students sell the merchandise online or at community events. Bryan, a sophomore enjoys participating in BE because he learned how to "operate machines and what it takes to run a business." The only other example of vocational preparation of students involves Diego. Diego is a senior and interested in

becoming a firefighter; he shared he participated in a Fire Academy internship coordinated by the school, “We did physical training and we did simulations. [The firefighters] would say the room was on fire and we had to find to the people who were in danger. They talked to us about their work. It was really fun. I loved it!” According to staff, while this was a great opportunity for Diego, it was one that was sought after for him through an outside agency; these student internships do not exist on an ongoing basis.

**Extracurricular activities.** While opportunities do exist for students to participate in various physical and arts-based activities, the prospect for students to give back to Bayview, or the larger community, is fairly small. Bayview operates an afterschool program for all of its kindergarten through 12 grade students. High school students have a variety of options for participation. Physical activities include tennis and a soccer team organized in partnership with a local YMCA. Paulina, an 11th grader, mentioned she greatly enjoys sports: “I like to be involved in any opportunities I can get—any sport. I just really like being active.” The program also offers a variety of art-based activities which include visual and performing arts (e.g., knitting, improvisation, piano, drumming, and dance classes).

Opportunities for students to contribute to their school and community are limited. While educators did share examples of students having some minor responsibilities in the classroom—organizing and distributing materials, for example—more substantial projects did not exist. The school does not require community service of its students, nor does it offer that as an option as part of the school program. Ms. Phillips explained that she used to coordinate a community service program for her students, “we

worked with little kids and we've gone to other schools and read to elementary kids; we've even done it here with our younger students. That was so incredibly valuable for them, and I think for every human being to do something that you feel like is giving back. You don't know that feeling until you've done it, and these guys need to have that, and so that's a piece that, maybe it's a big one.” Ms. Phillips said that, although valuable, she is not currently organizing volunteer opportunities for her students because, “it’s a huge undertaking.” Similarly, Ms. Sikes lamented that she could not currently manage a program that would offer opportunities for her students to give back to the school or community.

**Parent support.** Part of the way that Bayview supports its students is by supporting the students' parents and guardians. The school’s educational liaison, Ms. Trujillo, works on increasing the level of parent/guardian engagement in school, provides parenting workshops, and assists parents in getting ID cards and driver’s licenses, government assistance, and looking for employment. Ms. Trujillo explained, “My job is to make sure that parents are connected on campus, to make sure that they understand that their choices and their routines and all the things that they do can positively or negatively affect their student's success in school.” Ms. Trujillo explained that, because the school is designed for students who are in homeless situations, parents have a school experience that is different than at a traditional school:

I think when our parents step on campus, they can spend a lot of time and energy hiding their situation from schools. They don't have to hide it here because, to be here, you have to be in a homeless situation. It's not something that they need to hide from the get-go. As we're asking them questions about what they need, they're more open with the information. There's a sense of relief of, "I don't have to hide this anymore." The more they share, the more assistance we're able to give them. I think that

making sure that they are comfortable and that they can trust us, helps when they're in a sticky situation that they don't want to tell anybody else, and they can trust us. Even if we can't fix the problem for them, we can be there with them while they try to figure it out, and I think that makes all of the difference.

This effort to support parents is in place because Bayview educators understand that it will result in a better educational experience for the students. Schools also improve their students' educational experiences by providing training to staff. How Bayview educators improve their professional skills will be explored next.

### **Staff Awareness and Development**

Because Bayview is a school specifically designed for homeless children and youth, educators interviewed could immediately identify each of their students as “homeless.” Educators reported having professional development about topics including student engagement strategies, instructional practices, and identifying and addressing issues of neglect and abuse but not topics that directly relate to educating homeless students. Ms. Phillips, an eight-year veteran at Bayview shared the following, “I do think we are really good about using each other as resources, especially when concerns or issues arise. But I think we take the ‘learn as you go’ approach which isn't ideal for our kids, but we do the best we can. During my first year, I made many mistakes because of my ignorance about the issues our kids and their families face. My understanding these past eight years has come from listening to the kids, their parents and Ms. Trujillo. The tour we took [of the family shelter] last year was a great education for me as well.”

Since Bayview is an alternative school, there are a number of structural components that differ from a traditional campus. According to students and staff, the smaller setting facilitates relationship-building and individualized attention. The school's

curriculum is focused on the majority of students who are credit deficient and, thus, does not offer A-G coursework. Bayview takes a holistic approach when it comes to setting goals for its students. Educators tend to students' most basic needs prior to focusing on developing academic, decision-making, and social skills. The influence of this approach can be seen in the array of services in place to support students.

Student support is the largest structural area at Bayview. Academic intervention includes mandatory tutoring for students at risk of failing. The small staff to student ratio means educators get to know each student and can intervene when social emotional issues arise. Strong efforts are made to prepare students for higher education but the school is lacking in vocational training programs for its youth. Finally, students report that there are a wide variety of extracurricular activities in which to participate but no avenues for them to contribute to the school or their community in a meaningful way.

### **School Culture and Climate**

Bayview offers its students a safe and positive environment where they feel welcome. Educators care about students and their work and students, in turn, recognize and appreciate adults' efforts. While the majority of participants reported a culture of high academic expectations, questions did arise as to whether this was pervasive throughout the school. What educators and students do to foster this positive culture and promote a sense of safety and trust will now be discussed.

#### **A Climate of Safety and Trust**

All students at Bayview reported feeling safe on campus. There are two main reasons that contribute to this safe climate on campus: the physical size of the campus and the efforts of the staff. Students reported that because Bayview is a smaller school,

there is very little conflict/safety concern. When asked why she felt safe at Bayview, tenth-grader Paulina replied, “Well, for one, it’s small. It’s a small school. I really feel more comfortable in smaller areas because I always thought that the smaller the area, the less problems that they have.” Fellow student La’Shante gave a similar response, “It’s a smaller school and there’s really not anything going on here, like violence, that type of stuff. There’s none of that going on here. I think I’ve maybe seen like not a fight but about to be a fight like one or two times.” La’Shante has been enrolled at Bayview for more than one year.

Educators put conscious effort into making the campus safe, and the students recognize that. Mr. Jimenez, the school counselor, understands that students come to school with social emotional challenges; he makes creating a safe outlet for those issues as part of his work, “There are other things that happened and they’re just coming to school anxious, angry, and annoyed. They bring it to school and they’re trying cope with it, they’re trying to laugh it off and they just can’t, it’s just too much. Giving them a place to let it out or just say nothing—maybe sometimes they can’t. They don’t want to talk to anyone; [they need] a place to be quiet. And we’re giving them the time and place to do that.” Students like Demi and Diego recognize that Bayview staff work at creating a safe and supportive campus. Demi said she felt safe because “if we have a problem we can always go to them, and we know that each time there’s going to be a consequence, but it will get solved in the end.” Diego explained, “One of the things that I like is say that I had a bad day and then all the teachers, staff, they see me say ‘Oh Diego what happened?’ or ‘I see you are sad. You can talk to me.’ You feel comfortable. You feel

like you can trust the staff, teachers, and everybody. They worry about you.” This level of trust not only create a physically-safe campus, but and emotionally-safe one as well.

Bayview students reported a school climate free from judgment and rich in empathy, trust, and a sense of family. This positive school culture may be attributed, in part, to the fact that all students attending Bayview are experiencing the same challenging living situation. According to Demi, “at [Bayview] you can be yourself. You don’t have to act like you’re stuck up or someone you’re not. You can just come to school as you are. You don’t need to do your hair because nobody is going to judge you. You just go into class, do your work and just be you.” While some students reported feeling supported because they attended a school free from judgment, others described the emotional support as much more purposeful.

Students and educators described Bayview as a school that fosters empathy and trust. “It’s probably because it’s smaller,” was Valentina’s justification for the supportive environment, “and because everybody knows what you’re going through—all the teachers. It’s not that they feel bad for us, but it just comes from the heart and they support us naturally.” Mr. Jimenez shared that “the teachers understand where the kids are coming from, they’re understanding of our population.” An example of such understanding emerged when speaking to Vice Principal Norris, “I grew up in [this] area, had a very open upbringing, spent most of my time with our nanny's family, so I spent most of my time with what might be considered families in poverty, even though we were living in an upper middle class area. I think that I've always been comfortable in that area because that's where I spent most of my time.”

Another major theme that emerged is a sense of trust among students and staff. Mr. Jimenez explained that students build trusting relationships, “with someone that's going to listen, that's not going to judge, be an advocate for [them], and a confidant for issues. At this school trust is... that's the only way we could reach the kids. They come in not trusting anyone and neither do the parents. The first wall that we try to break down is that we're here to offer resources—not to help—to offer resources so they can pick themselves up.” This approach seems to have paid off; students report trusting adults working at Bayview. Diego assured me “You can trust them. You have trust. You can be honest with them. You can be open. I feel like I can talk to them.”

This feeling of empathy and trust has developed into a sense of being a part of a family for a considerable amount of students; five out of twelve students and two educators interviewed considered Bayview students and staff “like family.” Teacher Sarah Phillips said the school “provides this amazing family connection where we're all doing these things that are different together and showing a different side of what, who they are, and who we are together, and it just makes it feel like we're a family with these things going on inside our family.” Molly explained Bayview “is like my second family and seriously I have moms, I have dads, I have sisters and brothers.” Mary, the Bayview freshman, explained that the sense of family comes from the support staff and students lend each other and the ritual they all follow, “We always say that we are like a family because we always support each other. When a new student comes in, we clap for them and we welcome them, and [Ms. Phillips] says, ‘hey kids, this is a new student.’ His name is whatever.”

This great climate of safety, trust, and feelings of being part of a family could be attributed to Bayview's unique context. A large portion of students interviewed mentioned the idea of the unique school environment and the positive effect it had on the culture of the school. Molly explained, "Because everybody here is basically in the same situation, or has gone through the same things, or is barely beginning through it, there's no room for judgment." Valentina added "We're all in the same situation, so I think everybody knows what's going on in everybody's life, kind of knows what's going on in everybody's life. They know how they feel, so they get it."

Mr. Jimenez spoke about the Bayview environment and the effect on its students, "Because of the environment that's been created here, the safe environment, the caring environment, the non-judgmental environment, if [students] come in dirty or they smell funny or their hair is messed up or tired or hungry, they're not going to be humiliated or made to feel less than anyone else. They feel comfortable, so the walls go down." The school culture, and how it is impacted by the attitudes of staff and students, will be explored further below.

### **Student and Educator Attitudes about the School Experience**

Overall, students and educators had a positive outlook on what takes place at Bayview. All students reported positive feelings about the school and school staff, a culture of high academic and social expectations, an environment where students are encouraged, and empowered to be successful. While a couple of staff members were critical of the level of expectations placed on Bayview students, the overall feeling of educators was positive.

Educator Jennifer Sikes lauded the mission Bayview had for its students.

“Bayview is about transformation,” she explained, “That’s what we’re about here.” Her partner teacher, Ms. Glover, offered her perspective, “I think it is the combination of the staff, of the program, of the services, and everything really sends a message to the kids, that we care about where they are, and where they're going to be. I'm glad that our school is like that, and I want us to keep being like that, and being more like that.”

These positive feelings the adults at Bayview have about the program transcend to the students as well. Paulina shared her perspective:

In general, the school, it’s really different. It’s like everything is a lot different than many other schools. Everybody knows each other here. It’s really pretty, like it is like a family at Bayview. So, if someone is having problems at home or needs help with anything, they’ll have someone always to be there for them. It’s pretty cool because if even if it’s like teachers or students or like counselors or anything, just like somebody is going to always be there at Bayview just helping you.

Diego, in his final year of high school, thought that more homeless students should have the option to attend a school like Bayview, “There’s a lot of help here, support, and I know I’m very lucky. I feel like there should be more schools like this. Not only here, they should be all over the place, all over needs them.” However, with Bayview operating under a federal exemption to operate a separate school for homeless students, replicating the model may be difficult.

Just as evident as the positive outlook by students and staff, was the culture of high academic and social expectations at the campus. Every Bayview educator was confident that students had the ability to learn and challenged them accordingly. Ms. Norris explained that the situation her students are currently facing does not define them, “The experience of homelessness is just something that the kid is going through, but

that's not who the kid is. They have the capacity to learn—definitely. And I think that if you didn't believe that, if any of the adults here didn't believe that, their time here would be pretty short because everybody believes in them.” Ms. Norris went on to explain what specific expectations she has for her students, “I have the expectation that [they] still need to learn. [They] still need to show up on time. [They] still need to be respectful. There's no difference in the expectations of a student because they're experiencing homelessness. A big factor that helps kids to be resilient is not letting the homeless situation be an excuse for not progressing, for not learning those social skills, and for not learning the academics.” Ms. Glover, the math and science instructor, agrees with Ms. Norris on the goal of high academic expectations. She shared that there is more at stake with this unique population, “I think we all, not only I, think it is even more important to have high expectations because our students have big deficits, and I actually think I have higher expectations for my kids. Most of us do, because we want our kids to be able to either go back to the traditional school setting, go to a college, do whatever it is that is going to help them break out of this homeless cycle.”

Evidence of those high expectations was shared by staff and students alike. Mr. Jimenez explained that, once the basic social and emotional needs are met, the focus can turn to academics:

We've taken care of this need that you have, now we have this work. It's not going to be like saying, “Okay, you don't have to do it because you had issue.” And I see the work... I go into the classrooms and I see the TAs working with the students, not giving them the answers. I see the rigor in the classrooms, I see the teachers not afraid to give out assignments to the students. The students are having a tough time. They're having a tough time. A lot of them are grade levels behind, but the teachers are not making it easier for them just so they can catch up. The rigor is there and without the belief that they could do it, I would expect

that someone that didn't have that belief would cut corners or make it easier on them. And that wouldn't be beneficial for anybody.

According to educators and students, this culture of high academic and social expectations is paired with a great amount of support. “Educationally, I'm going to find a way to help them learn,” declared Ms. Phillips “and sometimes that’s a huge challenge depending on where they’re at, but it might mean that I'm going to have a tutor sit down one-on-one with them so that they can get it. I'm going to figure out whatever I need to do to make sure that they can get the information that I'm teaching and that I believe that they can learn.” Students at Bayview also spoke of the academic expectations and support they received at the school. Molly recalled an initial experience at Bayview, “I was falling behind in the traditional school, and when I came here I wasn’t expected to know everything in the book. Math, for instance, I came in and I was behind in my math and Mr. Al was my teacher at the time. He helped me step-by-step and then as soon as I got the help that I needed from there on I was helping teach the other kids.” Mr. Al is a math intervention teacher on staff at Bayview; students get referred to work with him on an individual or small-group basis. Student Paulina had a similar experience with her math work:

I remember when I started here with Ms. Glover and I was doing algebra, and before that I didn’t do a lot of math. Before that I dropped out of school. I didn’t go to school for almost two years, a year and a half. I didn’t know anything; well I knew things but not things from algebra, like the Pythagorean Theorem, all that stuff. I remember saying “I can’t do this!” And they said “you can do it. Look, you can stay for academic support; we can have tutors work with you. You can do it. You can start learning.” They would tell me that I could do it, but they never told me “oh, no you’re not going to do it.” Do you know what I mean? It was always that I had the support.

Indeed, the majority of educators and staff provided examples of how Bayview holds its students to high expectations. There were a few accounts, however, of staff sharing instances of instructors lowering standards for students because of challenges the students were facing. Ms. Trujillo offered one example,

I'm thinking of a high school student that has been a student of ours for many years. He has been having some mental health issues and has made some unsafe choices. I think some of adults here treat him with kid gloves and don't hold him accountable for his behavior, because they're afraid that he's damaged or they will do more damage to him. That teaches him manipulation. The lowered expectations that they have for him—he gets that. Kids get that. Kids know when you're treating them differently or you think that they're incapable. The smarter students, the more capable students are able to use that to their advantage, I think. We're doing a disservice by teaching them how to use it.

In a follow-up interview, Mr. Jimenez shared his perspective on the topic, “I see that the care factor is there. The adults who work here, they know what they're coming to, and the heart is there. I think that emotionally it's a lot, it's pretty draining. I think sometimes it's 100 percent there, and other times it's like, we're human. The wanting to rescue people and wanting to save them... I think sometimes it does get in the way with some staff and it becomes an enabling process.”

Regardless of the differences of opinion on expectations, all agreed that students attending Bayview were encouraged and empowered to do their best, and their success were celebrated by all. Teacher Sara Phillips, who has established relationships with long-term students, recalled an interaction with a former student needing some encouragement, “Academically, I feel like kind of the cheerleader to keep them going and let them know they're going to be fine. I had a kid check in with me today because he knew it was a new grading period. He was in high school, and he was said ‘I need you

to tell me it's going to be okay,' because I do that. They want to believe it. I do believe for them it's going to be okay—especially if they're asking, then yes, they are motivated enough to make it okay.” Students who experienced this encouragement, spoke about it with appreciation, Gabriella, a sophomore explained “The faculty here has a very positive attitude pushing the students and me to our full extent of learning. They will never say, ‘No’ or ‘It’s OK to give up.’ They always push us, even though we might be saying, ‘Get away from me.’ They’ll tell us, ‘You got to get this done.’” Teacher Jennifer Sikes explained there is a great purpose for that level of encouragement:

I think we’re saying to the kids there are enough adults here that will listen to the kids and even if the kids don’t always get what they want, because they’re not going to always get what they want, but I feel like they know they’re going to be listened to—no matter what. It’s empowering for them. That word, empowering, is thrown around all the time but it gives them hope, it gives them a sense that it’s worth it so that they don’t give up because that’s what you’re wanting them to do is not give up. They are in these terrible situations and some people have kind of given up. Some people around them, sometimes, have given up. You have to keep them going somehow.

Judging from all the interviews with Bayview educators, empowering the students is a major goal.

All staff at Bayview have consensus that they want their students for have a sense of empowerment and success. School administration and support staff discussed how they accomplish this on a day-to day basis, “The first wall that we try to break down is that we're here to offer resources, not to do the work for them, to offer resources so they can pick themselves up. The part of starting to teach the kids and parents to take care of themselves starts right at the front door” said Mr. Jimenez. Terry Norris shared some similar thoughts, “We teach them that they need to stand on their own two feet and that

they may not have had control over getting into that situation, but they certainly have control over getting out of it.” According to staff, part of formula to empower students to do well is celebrating milestones—large and small. Ms. Phillips discussed how she celebrates these and why, “I like celebrating little successes, especially for the kids who haven't had many in school and recognizing that yesterday they didn't know this one concept, and today they do and so they just learned it. It's really focusing on those little tiny elements of teaching and learning that happen and so that's where...to me that's the baby steps to get there.” These positive attitudes and approach foster strong, supportive relationships between adults and peers. Much like high academic and social expectations, caring relationships are critical in promoting resilience in this population.

### **Caring Relations and the Support They Offer**

A major theme that emerged from the data was the existence of a strong network of support for homeless youth. Educators and students provided concrete examples of caring adult and peer relationships and the favorable outcomes that resulted. Students identified specific people, adults and other youth, with whom they could establish a deeper connection. They also expressed strong support from the school as whole; the climate of the school was such that students felt that they could talk to “just about anybody” when they needed assistance.

According to staff at Bayview, building relationships with youth who are part of such a transitional population is high-stakes and has a sense of urgency to it. Both students and staff explained that part of building resilience in homeless youth is establishing these student-adult relationships. Ms. Trujillo explained the importance of the efforts, “I think that one of the things that we do best at Bayview is build relationships

with students. I feel very strongly, personally, that we have a really small window of opportunity to connect with the family, a parent and a child, when they step on campus. If we don't do our best to build a relationship from the beginning, it's going to impact how we serve that family because they might not trust us. They might not stay. They might not believe that we can actually help them.” To illustrate this idea Ms. Trujillo shared an anecdote of a former student who, because of close relationships he established at Bayview, was able to earn his high school diploma:

He had gotten out of juvenile hall and was completely disinterested in school. He did not want to have anything to do with us or with the classroom; he thought he wasn't going to graduate. School wasn't for him. He had never had success in previous schools and after working with the resource teacher and his classroom teacher he became very close to them. And he was successful, and he became motivated to succeed because of his personal relationships with them. Had he not been here, had he returned to his previous school, he told me he would not have made it.

Reports of close relationships with educators emerged frequently. While most frequent and strongest connections were between students and their classroom teachers, students report having close relationships with other staff members as well. Mr. Jimenez explained that classroom teachers are usually the first point of contact for a many students. It is at this level that many students established supportive relationships. Molly shared that “seeing that the teachers knew what we were going through and the fact that they’re really open and willing to sit and talk with us [about] school stuff or just personal stuff, that made it more of a friendship than it did like a teacher student relationship.” The majority of students said they would go to their teachers for “anything;” specific examples included getting advice about “family situations” and issues with peers. During the interview, Mary took the time to comment about her former teacher Ms. Phillips,

“She’s a really good teacher. She treats us like if she was our mom and we were her family.” The majority of students compared their teachers to friends and family members.

While classroom teachers played a key role establishing and maintaining caring relationships with their students, the culture at Bayview is such that nearly every adult on campus has the potential to be a source of support for homeless youth. All students declared that, if they needed support or advice not related to academics, they would feel comfortable speaking to whomever was available. Sophomore Gabriella stated, “I feel like anybody can have very good advice here when you’re in trouble, when you need any help. Anyone here can help you. And I feel like, if I have a problem, I can pretty much come up to anyone. I can go to the front desk. I can go to Ms. Maria in the cafeteria. I can go to anyone and they would pretty much help me.” Bayview students mentioned that they approached teaching assistants, the librarian, After School Program staff, and volunteers who come in to tutors students. Ms. Norris agreed that the supportive environment of the school is such that students can go to just about anybody for support:

I've seen them go to anybody. I've seen them go to the classroom teacher. I've seen them go to the receptionist, I've seen them go to the school secretary. I've seen them go to Ms. Trujillo. It's whoever is there. They just know that it doesn't matter who they talk to, we'll figure out how to get what they need, either we'll get it or we'll say, “You need to talk to Ms. Nicole about that,” or “You need to go to Mr. Jimenez about that.” They know that all of us know who they should go to, so they usually just asked whoever the first person is that they see.

Students also reported that they will turn to each other when they need support or encouragement. Interestingly, students reported they would turn to their peers for advice with less frequency than they would to educators; only Gabriella identified two of her

peers as people she would turn to for non-academic help. Educators reported that they have observed students “relying on each other.” Ms. Trujillo explained that “our kids are really good about taking other kids under their wing.” Mr. Jimenez agreed and added, “the kids usually turn to each other first. What they do is relay who here can help them.”

### **Summary**

In sum, an analysis of the data reveals that small school, specifically-designed for homeless youth, can offer some distinct benefits to these students. There are, however, some components lacking that would further promote resilience in this group. Bayview’s structure has purpose; students experience academic, social, and emotional support. Educators and students affirmed this. The low student-to-educator ratio provides an environment for students to take advantage of individual tutoring and small group instruction. This individualized approach is continued when intervening on social emotional issues.

Structural components that require further development include curriculum and instruction and staff development. Bayview does a better job teaching those students who are credit deficient and on track to transition to a junior college than those gearing toward a 4 year university. Those who are on track to attend a four-year university and wish to continue attending Bayview must choose to take dual-enrollment courses off campus. With regards to staff development, when new staff members are introduced to the school, there is no formal orientation or training about specific topics relating to homeless education—staff report they are left to “figure it out” on their own.

The culture at Bayview is robust and described as supportive, warm, and caring. All students and educators have a great attitude and outlook of the program and their

experiences within it. Students feel supported and cared for which is critical in a learning environment created for students with high academic and social emotional needs.

An analysis of the structure and culture at Bayview School reveals a supportive program that, in many ways, fosters resilience in homeless youth. A small school environment with a high staff to student ratio means students receive academic and social emotional support; the social support is extended to students' parents and guardians as a means to support the educational experience of enrolled youth. Limited curriculum and avenues for students to contribute may be construed as having limited expectations of students and constraining resilience.

The warm and supportive Bayview climate may be a result of the unique context where every student attending is experiencing the same homeless situation. This group of students reportedly needs a safe school with educators they can trust. By all accounts, students have a wide network of adults and peers on campus that can provide the caring and supportive relationships necessary to develop resilience.

## CHAPTER SIX: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Chapters Four and Five present findings on City High School and Bayview School, correspondingly. In this chapter, I review the data with special attention to the common and unique themes across the schools. My research questions will guide the examination between the two units of analysis (i.e. each school site). As a reminder, the main research question asks what protective factors (caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation) are available to homeless youth at each school. The ways in which institutional structures support or constrain these protective factors are also considered. Next, the influence each school's climate has on the protective factors is explored. The goal of the final sub question was to measure how students experience the protective factors at their schools; this question will be answered addressed in the responses to the other questions.

In general, examples of all three protective factors were found at both schools. The extent to which each protective factor existed, however, was wide-ranging (Table 5). Institutional factors at City High School, include a variety of courses and extracurricular activities enhance the protective factors. On the contrary, a high student to educator ratio, a lack of professional development on the topic of homeless education, and an inadequate level of support from the district are all components that constrain resilience for homeless youth. The school's climate was favorable for some homeless students but not others. In general, students and educators blamed each other for not caring. Relatedly, the majority of students report that a climate of "it's on you" exists if a student wants to experience success. On a positive note, all students reported feeling safe on campus.

At Bayview, small class sizes foster resilience by providing students individualized attention and support. On the contrary, the lack of college prep courses and few opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution leave room for improvement. According to Bayview educators and students, the school climate is warm and nurturing. Educators take a holistic approach to serving students, tending to more than just their educational needs.

**Table 5:** Cross-Case Analysis

	City High School	Bayview School
Main Question: Protective Factors 1. Caring Relationships 2. High Expectations 3. Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	1. Present for 75% 2. Low social; high academic expectations for some 3. Stronger programs (i.e. extracurricular, vocational, community service)	1. More pronounced for all student participants; wider network 2. High social; high academic expectations not fully institutionalized 3. Limited, no-cost activities
Sub-question One: Institutional Structures	-Varied courses and extracurricular activities -High student: educator ratio -No systematic way of identifying students -Lack of professional development on homelessness -Narrow focus of district support	-Low student: educator ratio leads to individual attention, greater support -Free after school program -Limited course offerings -Lack of community service opportunities
Sub-question Two: School Culture and Climate	-Safe -Supportive for groups of students -Mutual blame for lack of caring -“It’s on you.”	-Holistic approach -“culture of caring” -High interest in higher-ed

### **Research Question One: Protective Factors at City High School and Bayview School**

Evidence of all three protective was found at each school. However, the degree to which each of these protective factors is offered to students is what differentiates one program from the other. Furthermore, it seems that some homeless students who attend City High have access to the protective factors while others are going without these

resources. For example, pockets of City High School students had caring relationships with educators on campus while the majority of students at Bayview School had this resource in place. Both schools have varying academic and social expectations for their students. Homeless high school students at each program would benefit from a raised level of expectations and an increase in the support to meet those expectations. Lastly, City High School students report a deeper level of participation in and contribution to their school than those at Bayview.

When it comes to caring relationships, experiences of City High and Bayview students differ greatly; students attending Bayview had a wider network of support. While 75% of City High students identified someone they could go to for social emotional support; seven out of the twelve students said Mr. Gomez, one of the school counselors, would be the person they would approach. All Bayview students named at least one person they could access for help and most students said they would go to any educator on campus.

Reports of the presence of a caring staff at City High were mixed. Students like Yolanda felt that educators “put up a front” and gave the impression they did not care about student success. On the contrary, other students like Landon and Analisa provided concrete examples of how educators have shown ongoing support. These students, and others like them, explained that they felt their teachers were “like friends” and appreciated educators “talking to them like a real person.” In this same vein, students received emotional support from staff when experiencing peer and family issues. Students report that some educators were “empathetic” and able to relate to students on a personal level. In an academic context, a few students also reported educators provide

individual support with college and financial aid applications. These mentoring-type relationships were informally established by those participating in them; unfortunately, there is no formal mentoring program in place for homeless students at City High.

Similar to City High, Bayview students and staff shared examples of informal mentoring relationships. These relationships were forged between staff members, amongst students and educators, and between students. In fact, Molly, a Bayview senior disclosed that she had close relationships with two educators on campus whom she considered her mentors and also thought of herself as a mentor to younger students.

The presence of caring relationships is the strongest protective factor present at Bayview School. Educators at the school take a holistic approach to serving the academic, social, and emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness. As such, student/educator relationships are forged with a greater sense of purpose and meaning. Moreover, every student noted the existence of a caring or supportive relationship with Bayview educators. Often, students shared that they felt comfortable seeking advice or support from any adult on campus. The entire school provides a caring and supportive environment for homeless youth.

With regards to academic expectations, the schools differ in a number of ways. Students at City High School have access to more rigorous courses compared to Bayview. City High School provides students access to A-G courses necessary to transition to a UC or CSU higher education institution. For the majority of its students, Bayview has a focus on credit recovery and skills remediation; those students interested in going directly to a UC or CSU school must take the required A-G coursework at local community colleges through their dual enrollment program. According to Ms. Law, one

of Bayview's school counselors, six of the forty-four high school students participated in a dual enrollment program during the 2011-12 school year. Access to rigorous high school courses, however, does not necessarily mean high academic expectations are in place for all students.

While some students at City High School reported that educators held them to "a higher standard," evidence collected through observations and interviews illustrated that low academic expectations were not isolated. Observation in one classroom revealed students disengaged in the subject matter (i.e. using their cell phone, talking to their peers, and resting their head on their desk for extended periods of time) with minimal teacher intervention. According to students and educators, these low academic expectations are common at City High. Ms. Romero, the school principal, also described a lack of student engagement with "little or no" intervention in some classes. A lack of a formal and mandatory tutoring hour or "homework club" for students illustrates the feeling reported by students that, when it comes to succeeding academically, they are on their own.

On the other hand, educators described a culture where the majority of staff held students to high academic expectations. While there are formal interventions in place that signal educators holding students to a high standard, structural improvements are necessary in order to say that high academic expectations are embedded in the Bayview culture. Mandatory academic support for those students who are at risk of failing a course is an effective intervention. Students meeting with the guidance counselor and having an awareness of their high school credits is important. Even more important is the opportunity students have to make up credits through individualized

credit recovery coursework. With regards to high academic expectations, however, the school falls short by not offering any A-G approved courses to its students. A review of student participants' transcripts reveals that one fourth of students are on track with their high school credits and earning an average of a 3.5 GPA signaling that, at least for a small group of Bayview students, it may appropriate to offer coursework with more rigor. Furthermore, evidence of lowered academic expectations, by a few classroom teachers, is cause for concern as it can potentially undermine the efforts to foster resilience in these youth.

Opportunities for students to participate in and contribute to their school in a meaningful way were also found in the literature to promote youth resilience (Benard, 2004; Passeio-Rabideau & Toro, 1997). In comparing the two research sites, City High School has much stronger extra-curricular, vocational training, and community service programs. Because it is a traditional high school, City High offers more of a wide array of traditional extra-curricular activity options including California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) sanctioned sports, student government, and other student clubs/organizations. The school also offers structured vocational training programs like culinary courses and student store which give students valuable work experience and develop marketable skills.

On the contrary, Bayview's After School Program (ASP) is small and has a smaller offering of activities. As such, high school student participation in ASP is not as robust. One benefit of Bayview's ASP is that lack of student funds does not prevent a student from participating—any necessary fees for participation, supplies, etc. are subsidized by the school. By contrast, City High students shared that they did not

participate in some school activities or would have had a more positive experience if cost issues had not come up.

With regards to students positively contributing to their school and community, City High offers a more structured program. Depending on which smaller school within City High students attend, students are expected to complete a minimum 40 hours of community service before they earn their high school diploma. Because of this requirement, the school provides opportunities for students to give back to the school and the neighboring community by participating in campus cleanup, feeding the homeless, and beach cleanups to name a few. Conversely, Bayview does not have a defined community service program for its students. Educators cited a lack of time as a reason for not individually providing this resource to students.

#### **Sub-question One: Institutional Structures Impacting the Protective Factors**

Each school has institutional structures that support and constrain the three protective factors explored. At City High School, the structural factors that positively influence the protective factors of some students include the wide range of options for coursework and extracurricular activities. City High School students have the ability to take college prep, A-G courses, online classes to recover credits, and vocational training classes that provide valuable work experience.

There are, however, a number of structural issues at City High School that constrain the protective factors for homeless youth. A high student-educator ratio leads to some students feeling isolated and without a source of support at school. Often times, classroom teachers are the first point of contact with students and the people who can identify academic as well as social emotional issues early on; with City High School

teachers seeing over 100 students per day, it is much more difficult for teachers to identify and intervene on these issues. Next, the lack of a systematic way for educators to identify homeless students is a major constraint in fostering resilience for this population. Having this fundamental awareness allows for an educator to identify and intervene on academic, social, and emotional concerns more quickly. I consider this issue to be related to the school's organizational structure because of the lack of training; teachers have the ability to identify which of their students are homeless using their student information system but they are not aware of how to do so.

Bayview School also has structural components that positively and negatively affect the protective factors offered to students. A small educator to student ratio means that students have a better chance of receiving individualized support; students reported that adults took notice and intervened when they were struggling academically, socially, or emotionally. An educational liaison focuses her work on supporting parents and guardian with the goal of improving students' educational experiences. Bayview's afterschool program does offer all of its high school students an opportunity to participate in various activities at no cost. While the range of activities is limited when compared to a traditional high school, seven out of twelve student participants reported participating in the afterschool program on a regular basis.

One structural factor that constrains fostering resilience is the limited coursework options. Students not having easy access to A-G approved courses conflicts with having high academic expectations. As previously mentioned, students interested in taking these courses that are more rigorous and will help them fulfill requirements for the UC and CSU systems must do so by taking these courses off campus at community colleges in

the area. This poses a big sacrifice for students because they have to travel to and navigate other educational institutions.

Another structural component at Bayview which is constraining other protective factor is the lack of opportunities for students to participate in community service activities. Students interested in performing community service must seek out these opportunities on their own or through the assistance of an educator on campus. Students and educators report this is done infrequently and not in a systematic way.

### **Sub-question Two: Schools' Culture and Climate Impacting the Protective Factors**

At City High School, support exists for certain students experiencing homelessness. The climate on campus is such that certain groups of students have access to academic, social, and emotional supports while youth not belonging to a formal group are less supported.

City High students participating in the Business Institute, a cohort-based program for those interested in pursuing a business-related field, and those homeless students living at the neighboring teen shelter have greater access to support and interventions. The students in BI are expected to maintain minimum grades; if they do not, after-school tutoring is mandated. Similarly, homeless students living in a nearby group home also have access to different levels of support when compared to other homeless students attending City High. Those residing at the group home can be easily identified by educators and have the support of an educational liaison, a staff member at the group home, who supervises their educational caseload. On the contrary, students who are homeless and not residing in the group home, largely go unidentified as such by educators. As a result, these students have a lower potential of receiving individualized

attention and much-needed support. Students living in the shelter had a much more positive academic, social, and emotional outlook when compared to those students residing in other settings.

At City High, there was inconsistency in the level of caring experienced by students. While some students reported that educators were not approachable and “put up a front,” others had concrete examples of teachers and counselors who took time out of their day to offer encouragement and assistance with school work, applying to colleges, and navigating difficulties with peer and parent/guardian relationships. This area of caring is significant because educators and students seem to be caught in a conflicting situation. Student participants reported that teachers “don’t care” and, therefore, students behave inappropriately. Conversely, there was a general sense among educators that students are not motivated to learn and, therefore, they should not have to “put up” with difficult students.

Two general statements can easily be made about the climate at City High School. First, students feel safe on campus. This sense of security is important for this population of students who often become homeless because of domestic violence. Secondly, all students interviewed gave the impression that, if a student wanted to academically succeed, it was ultimately up to them. In other words, the climate on campus is that the school or its educators are not there to “do whatever it takes” to foster academic success in homeless youth. Those that attain success do so because of their own resilience, because they happened to live at the right group home, or apply to the program with additional support.

By comparison, the climate at Bayview has a very different feel to it. This difference could be attributed to the fact that the school is smaller in size and enrollment and is specifically designed for students experiencing homelessness. While some of the cultural aspects are supportive of students and foster resilience, others may actually fall short being a protective factor for youth. The overall holistic approach taken by Bayview educators seems to be effective. Educators and students agree that Bayview is a nurturing and warm environment. Lastly, while the school has adopted a culture of encouraging students to pursue higher education, more needs to be done to support students pursuing this goal.

Bayview takes a holistic approach to educating its students—all of whom are experiencing homelessness. While educators report that academics are the most critical goal of the school, they also carefully tend to students' social and emotional needs. According to educators, this network of support is in place for the purpose of removing barriers to academic success. Educators report that the school is a “special place” and, in general, students see the school and its educators as part of their family.

Bayview School has a clearly-established culture of caring; students and educators overwhelmingly discussed this topic. Examples of caring relationships are established between educators and students and amongst students. Students benefit from informal mentoring relationships with adults where issues ranging from academics to family dynamics to peer problems are discussed. Students also report a feeling a high level of trust, security and empathy and belonging to a family. The idea, reported frequently by students, that they can and do ask "anybody" for assistance illustrates that students feel comfortable and cared for while at Bayview.

Bayview has established a culture where talks of students pursuing higher education are common among staff and youth. Students often mentioned goals about going to college; educators shared that students should have the option of pursuing a college degree and saw this milestone as an opportunity for students to escape their difficult living conditions. While this college-going culture is admirable, a barrier that exists is the lack of college-preparatory courses on campus.

### **Summary**

City High and Bayview are very different school sites and yet they both serve homeless students within the same geographic area. In fact, some homeless students have attended both schools at some point in their four years of high school. Clearly both schools exhibited protective factors, however the depth of each factor varied between schools. Bayview provides a stronger example of caring relationships to support student success; students report the network of support is much wider. While educators at both schools report having high expectations in place, examples were found at each campus to support and refute these claims. City High offered the curriculum to better prepare students for college admission yet, some City High educators allowed students to not be engaged in the learning process. On the contrary, Bayview educators were quick to identify and intervene on student behavior but do not provide the college-prep or vocational courses to better prepare students for the future. Finally, City High students have more opportunities to participate in and contribute to their school and community through various school clubs and organizations.

Having a better understanding of these schools' institutional structures and climate, which help foster resilience in homeless youth, provides some direction for

future work. In the chapter that follows, I will provide a summary of the investigation, recommendations for future research, as well as implications for professional practice.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a summary of the study and its findings. In addition, this chapter offers a discussion of findings and suggestions for theory, future research, and practice.

### **Summary of Dissertation**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The number of homeless American school-aged children is daunting and continues to grow. In 2010, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and First Focus reported that 956,914 children were homeless in the United States; this figure increased by 41% since 2008. In June of 2012, the National Center for Homeless Education stated that 1,065,794 homeless students enrolled in preschools and K-12 schools during the 2010-2011 school year—the highest number on record.

The risks for children and youth who are experiencing homelessness and attending school are well-documented. While some studies have identified resilience-promoting qualities within homeless children, little focus has been put on schools and their role in promoting resilience. There is a dearth in scholarly research exploring the experiences of homeless students in the influence school structures and culture have on those experiences. By examining the protective factors that homeless students experience in two different schools, this study sheds some light on the challenges, successes, and provides research-based interventions for this student population.

## **Purpose and Research Questions**

This investigation's conceptual framework is divided into four key areas: risks homeless students face, research on resilience, and school culture and climate. Initially, I described the health, academic, family relationship, and social emotional risks. Then, I reviewed the literature on resilience within the general population and homeless youth. Benard's (2004) research on resilience-promoting schools was the lens through which I approached my investigation. Benard (2004) believes that resilience-promoting schools make it a priority to offer caring relationships, high academic and social expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution. Lastly, I shared what is known regarding school organizational structures and climate that directly impact the three protective factors.

Enrollment, school class size, and transportation are but a few components of a school's institutional structure. Elements of institutional structures that influence the three protective factors were considered in this investigation. These include: student support, curriculum and instruction, and staff awareness and development.

Meeting the educational needs of homeless children goes beyond academics. Fostering success for such a vulnerable population requires educators to provide a warm and stable climate within the classroom and on a school wide level (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). A nurturing environment will foster a sense of belonging, security, and self-confidence. This may result in increased academic performance, attendance, motivation, self-discipline, and problem-solving (Brooks, 1994). School culture components addressed include safety, educator attitudes, academic expectations, opportunities for classroom and school participation, and relationships with adults and peers.

Benard's research on resilience and resilience-promoting schools provided a firm foundation for this investigation. What was missing, however, was applying that framework to a high-risk student population: homeless youth. Also missing was research on the type of school setting, traditional or modified comprehensive, which can meet the diverse needs of homeless students.

The present study explored the following overarching research questions and sub-questions: What protective factors (i.e. caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation) for homeless youth are offered at a traditional school and a modified comprehensive school specifically designed for students experiencing homelessness?

The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. In what ways do the institutional structures support or constrain the protective factors?
2. How does a school's culture and climate influence the protective factors?
3. How do students experience the protective factors?

### **Review of Methodology**

A traditional, urban high school and a K-12 modified comprehensive school specifically designed for students experiencing homelessness served as the context for this study. This study involved interviews with a total of thirty-six participants—eighteen from each school site. In the interest of parity, twelve students and six educators from each school participated in interviews. Document analyses were conducted to inform the student interviews and look for patterns in coursework, interventions, relationships with adults and peers, and evidence of opportunities for student

participation and contribution. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a series of guided questions on the three protective factors and the schools' structures and climate; questions were informed by the literature and document analyses. Classroom observations occurred over the course of four months and at various times of the school day. They focused on school structures and climate as they relate to the three protective factors. The data gathered from the documents, interviews, and observations were organized and analyzed by coding the data using NVivo software and developing key themes within the cases.

### **Overview of Significant Findings**

The analysis of the results revealed that both research sites offered homeless students varying degrees of all three protective factors. Part of my initial theory that both programs would offer homeless youth some level of the protective factors was correct. However, my hypothesis that Bayview, as a school specifically designed for homeless students, would have more purposeful offerings of caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation was not correct.

While Bayview offers more robust examples of caring relationships, high academic expectations and a wider variety of opportunities for students to participate and contribute to the school community are needed. At City High School, more could be done to establish caring relationships between educators and homeless students. The varied curriculum and extracurricular activities signal that, to a degree, high academic expectations and opportunities for participation and contribution are organizational strengths at City High School.

Results from the present study revealed that a large conceptual framework of resilience-promoting schools has a strong application to promoting resilience in homeless high school youth. Indeed caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution were regarded as beneficial to these high-risk students at both research sites.

Previous studies suggest that homeless students lack social support from adults and peers, which can damage self-esteem (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Anooshian (2000) reports this lack of quality relationships is an obstacle to educational success. Students in this investigation corroborate Benard's recommendation that schools can provide alternate sources of support when they are lacking at home. While some students gained academic guidance from educators, others sought social emotional support. Students appreciated a personal connection with these caring adults and even compared them to family.

The second component of Benard's framework consists of the high expectations schools have of youth. Benard claims that positive expectations structure and guide behavior and challenge students "beyond what they believe they can do" (Benard, 2004, p. 73). Findings from this investigation support Benard's work; high social expectations are recommended as they provide a level of structure and, thus, safety and consistency. Also necessary, however, is concurrent support and understanding. In order for this to occur, it is imperative that educators provide individualized attention and support to homeless youth. Getting to know a student's typical behavior provides a baseline from which one can monitor growth and identify potential social emotional challenges.

The final component of Benard's framework addresses the opportunities students have to meaningfully participate and contribute. Researchers posit that school-organized events are critical to keeping youth engaged and connected (Julianelle, 2007; Nunez, 1994). Community service projects are seen as an opportunity for adults and students to work as a team while improving their school and/or neighboring community. While participants of this study certainly reported the above-mentioned benefits, they also offered up others. Opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution also develop student skills and may shape future career interests.

Findings of this investigation are both specific to the research sites and general when compared to the literature. Research findings indicate that both research sites offered all three protective factors to homeless youth—the degree to which each protective factor was offered varied. Benard's conceptual framework provided a valuable guide for this study. The three protective factors this researcher asserts promote resilience in a general student population were found to also have the same benefit to homeless students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While student participants in this study on the definition of "homeless," we know that there are varying degrees of homelessness. Some students in this study lived in group homes with more resources at their disposal. Others were doubled up with another family in order to afford rent. Still, other youth lived with members of their family in a vehicle. Future research should focus on homeless students at one school and investigate if there is a correlation between the living arrangement and the academic and social emotional outcome. In other words, is there a degree of homelessness and what are the

implications for fostering resilience in students within these various living situations?  
Should the approach be different depending on the living situation of the student?

This investigation has established that the three protective factors are needed and available at the two schools. The next step may be to look at the degree to which each protective factor is needed in order for resilience to be achieved. Is it essential to have one protective factor versus the other or are all three needed in relatively equal portions?

Future research could also examine a school's capacity to develop students' resilience. Research tells us that resilience is divided into three key elements: stress and risks, mediating mechanisms, and coping or protective mechanisms (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter 1987). The latter two have internal factors associated with each (i.e. temperament and self-esteem). Future research could explore the ways in which schools could develop these internal factors in homeless youth through counseling and other mental health programs. If in fact school interventions can help homeless students become more resilient, then perhaps these could be scaled up to other schools serving these students.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

Research findings revealed that there is a high level of caring relationships at Bayview School. Researchers who have studied alternative educational programs describe a phenomenon where these educational institutions provide a caring environment but a lowered level of academic rigor (Darling & Price, 2004; Fairbrother, 2008). In order for Bayview to not fall into the same trap, it is recommended that it increase the level of academic and social expectations it has for its students. Increasing the opportunities students have to participate in and contribute to their school community could also yield increased resilience in these youth.

As an organization, Bayview needs to raise expectations for students in order to better align with its "college going" culture. The school has a solid foundation with its academic guidance and tutoring programs and could build on these by offering a more rigorous curriculum to ease the transition from high school to higher education. Online coursework or partnerships with neighboring colleges or school districts could be a way to potentially introduce more students to more rigorous A-G coursework.

With Bayview's goal of meeting students' academic, social and emotional needs, there is a sense that Bayview adults will "do whatever it takes." While this approach is commendable, it creates a missed opportunity for students to get involved and do more for each other. Bayview educators cited little time to start community service program yet, with the additional staff members present to provide individual student support, it is suggested that a staff member leads community service events for students on and/or off campus. On campus, high school students could give back to the campus they find so supportive by tutoring younger students, organizing community clothing and toiletry donations, and assisting with maintaining the campus. Activities such as these develop leadership and vocational skills, and send a message to youth that they have resources to contribute.

There are also some recommendations for staff at City High School—some for educators working on campus every day and other for those at the district level. While staff members from the school district's Students in Transition Team do actively support students attending City High School, they are not able to support all homeless students. Unfortunately, there are simply too many students for the staff member meet with each of them individually. As such, it may be a more effective use of resources for district

support staff restructure some of their responsibilities and train the educators who work more closely with students. This approach could potentially result in earlier identification and intervention of students experiencing difficulties and a more efficient source of referral of students with higher need to the Students in Transition Team.

City High educators should have the capacity to easily identify students in their classrooms who are in homeless situations. Indeed, teachers are often the first point of contact for these students. This is not to say that they should be expected to intervene on every student who is homeless, but it would behoove these educators to be aware of the housing situations their students face in the event that a change in behavior or academic performance arises. Training educators how to interpret the identification codes in the student information system would be beneficial to a multitude of students—including those who are homeless.

Professional development for educators should not stop at the identification of this high-risk population. It is recommended that classroom teachers be trained on how to better support students who are experiencing homelessness. Training for staff members could include defining homelessness and the various living arrangements that constitute homelessness, identification strategies, resources available on campus, and ways to best support these students.

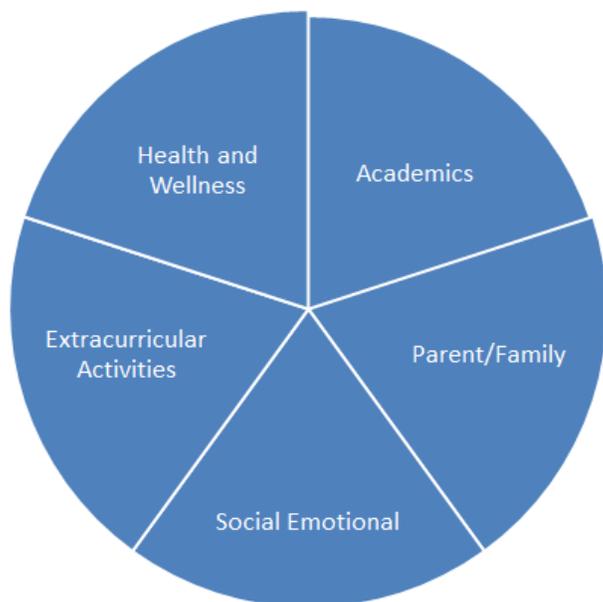
The last recommended way in which the district team could continue to support homeless students at City High is by following up on referrals made by educators. With an improved way of identifying students, a need to support these students will surely arise. City High students in this study reported not fully participating in extracurricular activities due to a lack of money to pay or replace equipment, having a place to change

into uniforms, etc. When these types of issues come up in the future and educators become aware, they ought to have a system in place to refer these students to school or district personnel.

One final recommendation is for City High School to consider implementing student counseling groups as a way of supporting homeless students. Gauging from field interviews, there is a level of interest among some students to participate and gain some support from their peers who are in similar situations. Principal Romero cited a need for a “center” where struggling students could go to for assistance with basic needs, job applications, social emotional support etc. Financial and operational support could come through grants or community partnerships. The student groups could be coordinated through such a center or through one of the school counselors. Of course, student participation would be voluntary and safeguards to protect confidentiality would have to be put in place.

In more of a general context, school leaders can improve practices and create an educational environment that fully meets the diverse needs of homeless students. Indeed, they can be the change agents necessary to foster resilience in these youth.

A school inventory, or a tool that can be used by schools educating homeless students, would provide direction in improving the educational experience for students. Figure 1 below depicts the five core factors necessary to provide an educational program that holistically meets the diverse needs of the homeless child.



**Figure 1:** Resilience-Promoting School Inventory. Academics, Parent/Family, Social Emotional, Extracurricular, and Health and Wellness are core factors necessary to provide a school environment that holistically fosters resilience in homeless children.

Included in the inventory are the following components: *Academics*-The academic program must provide rigorous instruction, differentiation to address multiple abilities and academic needs, and prepare students for various options beyond high school. An “academic hour,” held before or after school, is recommended to provide academic intervention and offer a place for student to complete assigned homework.

*Parent/Family*-The goal of this component is for parents to become more involved in their child’s education and to connect parents or guardians with resources in the community (i.e. social, housing, financial, etc.). Parenting classes are also part of this section.

*Health and Wellness*-A nutritional program would provide healthy food options and educate students on risk factors associated with malnutrition. Preventive care, ongoing treatment for chronic illnesses, and mental health services are all necessary as per the literature.

*Social Emotional*-social emotional counseling can prove to be effective

in promoting positive peer relationships. Group counseling and/or mentoring programs can provide a meaningful connection for students at risk of feeling isolated.

*Extracurricular Activities*-Opportunities for students to contribute to their school or their larger community are recommended. Access to physical activity, through organized sports, and meaningful participation in clubs would also be available.

In order to adequately address all the components of the school inventory, school leaders may need to look for external sources of funding and support. While federal categorical funding does exist to support homeless education, it is limited. Therefore, the school leadership team may need to consider looking for grants or other community support in order to put these programs in place.

While looking outside of the school for resources, school leaders should also consider potential partnership opportunities. Forging and/or strengthening relationships with nearby family shelters and group homes could be an effective way to improve student academic and social emotional outcomes. Creating connections across neighboring schools could also improve the use of limited resources available to shared families. Educators from these "partner schools" would have the opportunity to come together and share and learn best practices on ways to better serve youth experiencing

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Qualitative Study (Bayview School Student)**

Dear Bayview School Student,

I am a student in the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD). I am conducting a research study that seeks to explore the protective factors provided by schools to youth experiencing transition with housing. You are being contacted because you were identified by an educator within your school.

Through this research, I am hoping to identify elements of schools and school staff that enable them to foster resilience in youth (make students more successful). I believe this study has the potential to positively affect educational practices to improve outcomes for students impacted by housing instability.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed individually or in small groups (your choice, depending on what you feel more comfortable doing). The interview will have a conversational style and will last approximately one hour. During the interview you will be asked to describe your experiences in school. These experiences include schoolwork, school/after-school activities, and relationships with educators. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be provided with a transcript of the interview for checking and clarifying the information.

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process. Pseudonyms (fake names) for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and to eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations. Your responses will not be linked to your name or address.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research project. You will be compensated for your time with two AMC movie tickets. If you would like to participate, please reply to me by March 1, 2012. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,  
Joel Garcia  
Doctoral Student  
UC, San Diego and CSU, San Marcos  
619.540.8374  
jrgarcia@ucsd.edu

**Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in Qualitative Study  
(City High School Students)**

Dear High School Student,

I am a student in the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD). I am conducting a study that seeks to explore the protective factors provided by schools to youth experiencing transition with housing. You are being contacted because you were identified by an educator within your school.

Through this research, I am hoping to identify elements of schools and school staff that enable them to foster resilience in youth (make students more successful). I believe this study has the potential to positively affect educational practices to improve outcomes for students impacted by housing instability.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed individually. The interview will have a conversational style and will last approximately one hour. During the interview you will be asked to describe your experiences in school. These experiences include schoolwork, school/after-school activities, and relationships with educators. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be provided with a transcript of the interview for checking and clarifying the information.

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process. Pseudonyms for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and to eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations. Your responses will not be linked to your name or address.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research project. You will be compensated for your time with two AMC movie tickets. If you would like to participate, please reply to me by March 1, 2012. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,  
Joel Garcia  
Doctoral Student  
UC, San Diego and CSU, San Marcos  
619.540.8374  
jrgarcia@ucsd.edu

**Appendix C: Email Invitation to Participate in Qualitative Study  
(Bayview Educators)**

Dear Bayview School Educator,

I am a student in the Joint Doctoral Program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD). I am conducting a research study that seeks to explore the protective factors provided, by schools, to youth experiencing homelessness. You are being contacted because you were identified as an educator who has experience in working with this student population.

Through this research, I am hoping to identify elements of schools and school staff that enable them to foster resilience in youth impacted by homelessness. I believe this study has the potential to positively affect educational practices to improve outcomes for children and youth experience homelessness.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed individually. The interview will have a conversational style and will last approximately one hour. You may choose to have the interview take place at your school site or off campus—which ever makes you feel most comfortable. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your experiences in educating homeless students. These experiences include schoolwork, school/after-school activities, and relationships forged with these students. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be provided with a transcript of the interview for checking and clarifying the information.

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process. Pseudonyms for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and to eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations. Your responses will not be linked to your name or address.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research project. If you would like to participate, please reply to this email by March 1, 2012. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,  
Joel Garcia  
Doctoral Student  
UC, San Diego and CSU, San Marcos  
619.540.8374  
jrgarcia@ucsd.edu

**Appendix D: Email Invitation to Participate in Qualitative Study  
(City High School Educators)**

Dear Educator,

I am a student in the Joint Doctoral Program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD). I am conducting a study that seeks to explore the protective factors provided, by schools, to youth experiencing homelessness. You are being contacted because you were identified as an educator who has experience in working with this student population.

Through this research, I am hoping to identify elements of schools and school staff that enable them to foster resilience in youth impacted by homelessness. I believe this study has the potential to positively affect educational practices to improve outcomes for children and youth experience homelessness.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed individually. The interview will have a conversational style and will last approximately one hour. During the interview you will be asked to describe your experiences in educating homeless students. These experiences include schoolwork, school/after-school activities, and relationships forged with these students. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be provided with a transcript of the interview for checking and clarifying the information.

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process. Pseudonyms for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and to eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations. Your responses will not be linked to your name or address.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research project. If you would like to participate, please reply to this email by March 1, 2012. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,  
Joel Garcia  
Doctoral Student  
UC San Diego and CSU San Marcos  
619.540.8374  
jrgarcia@ucsd.edu

**Appendix E: Parent Informed Consent Form, Focus Group Interview,  
Bayview School**

University of California, San Diego  
**Consent to Have Your Child Act as a Research Subject**

**Risk and Resilience: Comparing the Educational Experiences of Students Impacted  
by Homelessness in Different School Settings**

Joel Garcia, under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Datnow, Professor and Chair, UCSD Education Studies, with approval of Bayview School and its school district, is conducting a research study to find out about the protective factors found within schools that promote resilience in youth. As a parent of a student impacted by housing instability your permission is requested for your child to participate in this study. There will be approximately 12 students participating in individual or focus group interviews as part of this study. The purposes of this study are to understand how students experience the protective factors and how the school structures and climate influence those same factors.

If you agree for your child to be in this study, the following will happen to him/her:

**Students will participate in an interview about their experiences attending Bayview School.** The interview will be conducted sometime between February 1, 2012 and May 30, 2012. The interview administration time is 45 minutes to an hour, and will be conducted in English. The researcher, who is also a credentialed teacher and school administrator, will ask the questions. The interviews will be held in a school administration office, with the permission of school administration.

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. This is highly unlikely since no teacher names or student names will be used. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. The UCSD Institutional Review Board may review research records.
2. Although the interview is brief, there is a possibility students may become bored or fatigued. Because the interview is voluntary, students may skip a question or discontinue the interview if this occurs.
3. The administration of this interview and its contents do not in any way create a risk for the teacher or his/her students. The results are in no way related to any evaluation or judgment of the teacher or students. **The students' participation and answers if he/she chooses to participate, are not a component of a student's evaluation or grade.**
4. Even with a parent's permission, a child may elect at any time, before or during the group interview, to not participate.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant findings.

The alternatives to participation in this study are for students to respond to the interview in a less than complete way by skipping a question(s), or to not participate in the interview, wherein the student will remain in class with his teacher and other classmates, doing regular school work.

There may or may not be a direct benefit to students from participating this study. The interview may serve students to reflect on how they feel about school (participation, relationships, etc.) The researcher may learn more about how best provide a school environment that fosters resilience, and society may benefit from this knowledge.

Your child's participation in the interview is voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate in the interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which he/she is entitled.

The researcher may remove your child from the study without your consent if the researcher feels it is in the child's best interest or the best interest of the study. The student may also be withdrawn from the study if he/she does not follow the interview instructions given by the researcher.

You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue.

Your student will be given two AMC movie tickets for their participation in this study.

Joel Garcia has explained this study to you and answered your questions. If you have any additional questions or research-related problems, you may reach Joel Garcia at (619) 540-8374. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 455-5050 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

I agree to permit my child to participate in the interview.

---

Subject's signature

---

Witness

---

Date

## Appendix F: Parent Informed Consent Form, Interview-City High School

### University of California, San Diego Consent to Have Your Child Act as a Research Subject

#### **Risk and Resilience: Comparing the Educational Experiences of Students Impacted by Homelessness in Different School Settings**

Joel Garcia, under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Datnow, Professor and Chair, UCSD Education Studies, with approval of City High School, is conducting a research study to find out about the protective factors found within schools that promote resilience in youth. As a parent of a student impacted housing instability your permission is requested for your child to participate in this study. There will be approximately 12 students participating in individual or interviews as part of this study. The purposes of this study are to understand how students experience the protective factors and how the school structures and climate influence those same factors.

If you agree for your child to be in this study, the following will happen to him/her:

**Students will participate in an interview about their experiences attending their school.** The interview will be conducted sometime between February 1, 2012 and May 30, 2012. The interview administration time is 45 minutes to an hour, and will be conducted in English. The researcher, who is also a credentialed teacher and school administrator, will ask the questions. The interviews will be held in a school administration office, with the permission of school administration.

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. This is highly unlikely since no teacher names or student names will be used. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.
2. Although the interview is brief, there is a possibility students may become bored or fatigued. Because the interview is voluntary, students may skip a question or discontinue the interview if this occurs.
3. The administration of this interview and its contents do not in any way create a risk for the teacher or his/her students. The results are in no way related to any evaluation or judgment of the teacher or students. **The students' participation and answers if he/she chooses to participate, are not a component of a student's evaluation or grade.**
4. Even with a parent's permission, a child may elect at any time, before or during the group interview, to not participate.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant findings.

The alternatives to participation in this study are for students to respond to the interview in a less than complete way by skipping a question(s), or to not participate in the interview, wherein the student will remain in class with his teacher and other classmates, doing regular schoolwork.

There may or may not be a direct benefit to students from participating this study. The interview may serve students to reflect on how they feel about school (participation, relationships, etc.) The researcher may learn more about how best provide a school environment that fosters resilience, and society may benefit from this knowledge.

Your child's participation in the interview is voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate in the interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which he/she is entitled.

The researcher may remove your child from the study without your consent if the researcher feels it is in the child's best interest or the best interest of the study. The student may also be withdrawn from the study if he/she does not follow the interview instructions given by the researcher.

You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue.

Your student will be given two AMC movie tickets for their participation in this study.

Joel Garcia has explained this study to you and answered your questions. If you have any additional questions or research-related problems, you may reach Joel Garcia at (619) 540-8374. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 455-5050 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

I agree to permit my child to participate in the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Appendix G: High School Student Assent Form, Interviews

School is a big part of your day. The researcher wants to understand what examples of protective factors (caring relationships, high academic and behavior expectations, and opportunities for participation and contribution) are present at your school.

If it is OK with you, we would like to ask you some questions about your experiences at this school. Your interview answers will help us to understand how to best serve students impacted by transitional housing.

-If you do not want to answer the interview questions, that's OK. Even if your parents have given permission for you to answer the questions, you may still choose not to answer them.

-If you change your mind and do not want to do this anymore after you start, that's OK too. These questions are not a part of your grade.

-If you choose not to participate, you can return to your classroom and your regular school work.

Do you have any questions about this?

If you sign your name on the line, it means you read this, and agree to answer the questions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix H: Bayview School Educator Informed Consent**

University of California, San Diego  
**Consent to Act as a Research Subject**

### **Risk and Resilience: Comparing the Educational Experiences of Students Impacted by Homelessness in Different School Settings**

Joel Garcia, under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Datnow, Professor and Chair, UCSD Education Studies, with approval of Bayview School and its school district, is conducting a research study to find out about the protective factors found within schools that promote resilience in youth experiencing homelessness. As an educator of students impacted by housing instability your permission is requested to participate in this study. There will be approximately 12 educators participating in individual interviews as part of this study. The purposes of this study are to understand how students experience school protective factors and how the school structures and climate influence those same factors.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will take place:

**Educators will participate in an interview about their experiences working at Bayview School.** The interview will be conducted sometime between February 1, 2012 and May 30, 2012. The interview administration time is 45 minutes to an hour, and will be conducted in English. The researcher, who is also a credentialed teacher and school administrator, will ask the questions. The interviews will be held in a location that is mutually agreed upon by the educator and researcher (classroom, school office, or neutral off-site location).

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. This is highly unlikely since no teacher names or student names will be used. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.
2. Although the interview is brief, there is a possibility educators may become bored or fatigued. Because the interview is voluntary, participants may skip a question or discontinue the interview if this occurs.
3. The administration of this interview and its contents do not, in any way, create a risk for the educator or his/her students. The results are in no way related to any evaluation or judgment of the staff member or students.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant findings.

There may or may not be a direct benefit to educators from participating this study. The interview may serve educators to reflect on how they feel about school (instruction, extracurricular activities, relationships, etc.) The researcher may learn more about how

best provide a school environment that fosters resilience and society may benefit from this knowledge.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue.

There is no compensation or cost for you participating in this study.

Joel Garcia has explained this study to you and answered your questions. If you have any additional questions or research-related problems, you may reach Joel Garcia at (619) 540-8374. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 455-5050 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

I agree to participate in the interview.

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Subject's signature

---

Witness

---

Date

## **Appendix I: City High School Educator Informed Consent**

University of California, San Diego  
**Consent to Act as a Research Subject**

### **Risk and Resilience: Comparing the Educational Experiences of Students Impacted by Homelessness in Different School Settings**

Joel Garcia, under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Datnow, Professor and Chair, UCSD Education Studies, with approval of City High School, is conducting a research study to find out about the protective factors found within schools that promote resilience in youth experiencing homelessness. As an educator of students impacted by housing instability your permission is requested to participate in this study. There will be approximately 12 educators participating in individual interviews as part of this study. The purposes of this study are to understand how students experience school protective factors and how the school structures and climate influence those same factors.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will take place:

**Educators will participate in an interview about their experiences working at City High School.** The interview will be conducted sometime between February 1, 2012 and May 30, 2012. The interview administration time is 45 minutes to an hour, and will be conducted in English. The researcher, who is also a credentialed teacher and school administrator, will ask the questions. The interviews will be held in a location that is mutually agreed upon by the educator and researcher (classroom, school office, or neutral off-site location).

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. This is highly unlikely since no teacher names or student names will be used. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.
2. Although the interview is brief, there is a possibility educators may become bored or fatigued. Because the interview is voluntary, participants may skip a question or discontinue the interview if this occurs.
3. The administration of this interview and its contents do not, in any way, create a risk for the educator or his/her students. The results are in no way related to any evaluation or judgment of the staff member or students.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant findings.

There may or may not be a direct benefit to educators from participating this study. The interview may serve educators to reflect on how they feel about school (instruction, extracurricular activities, relationships, etc.) The researcher may learn more about how

best provide a school environment that fosters resilience and society may benefit from this knowledge.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue.

There is no compensation or cost for you participating in this study.

Joel Garcia has explained this study to you and answered your questions. If you have any additional questions or research-related problems, you may reach Joel Garcia at (619) 540-8374. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 455-5050 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

I agree to participate in the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix J: Student Interview Protocol

Exploring School Protective Factors Available to Youth Experiencing Housing Instability

Date	
Time of Interview	
Place	
Interviewer	
Participant	
School	
Grade	

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purposes of this study are to understand how students experience school protective factors and how the school structures and climate influence those factors.*

*Your interview data will be kept confidential, available only to the researcher for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and a professional transcriptionist will listen to and transcribe the information you provide. The audio tapes will be destroyed following final analysis; no later than May, 2013.*

*Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.*

### Questions:

#### General:

1. Tell me about a typical day at this school.
2. Do you feel safe at this school? (Why or why not?)

#### Academic and Social Expectations:

3. Do you think educators (teachers, counselors, principal, etc.) at this school believe that you can learn?

4. Do the educators at this school challenge you? Please provide an example.
5. Are you encouraged to try your best?
6. Are there consequences if you don't do your best in your school work?
7. What happens if you don't behave best?

**Participation and Contribution:**

8. In your classroom, do you have any responsibilities?
9. Are you involved in any activities on campus? Please tell me about them.

**Caring Adult and Peer Relationships:**

10. Create a schedule for the day. (refer to question #1 above, if necessary)
  - a. Describe the relationship with each teacher.
  - b. What do you think of the class?
11. Who would you go to if you needed help with your homework? (list people and relationship)
12. Who would you go to if you needed other types of help (food, housing, school supplies, etc.)? (list person and relationship).
13. Is there any other information about your school that you think I should know?

### Appendix K: Interview Protocol-Educator Version

Exploring School Protective Factors Available to Youth Experiencing Housing Instability

Date	
Time of Interview	
Place	
Interviewer	
Participant	
Title	
School	
School District	

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to understand how students experience school protective factors and how the school structures and climate influence those same factors.*

*Your interview data will be kept confidential, available only to the researcher for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and a professional transcriptionist will listen to and transcribe the information you provide. The audio tapes will be destroyed following final analysis; no later than May, 2013.*

*Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.*

#### **Questions:**

##### **General:**

1. Tell me a about yourself. What is your position at this school? What are your responsibilities?

##### **Academic and Social Expectations**

2. Within the context of education and homeless students, what is/are the school's goal(s)?

3. Do you think educators (teachers, counselors, principal, etc.) at this school believe students experiencing homelessness can learn? Please provide some specific example/evidence.
4. Do the educators at this school challenge homeless students academically? Please provide example(s).
5. What happens if homeless students don't do your best in their school work? What are those consequences?
6. What happens if they don't behave in an appropriate/acceptable manner?

### **Opportunities for Participation and Contribution**

7. At this school, do homeless students have any classroom responsibilities?
8. Are they involved in any activities on campus? Please tell me about them.
9. Are there activities specific for students impacted by homelessness?

### **Caring and Supportive Relationships**

10. At this school, when students needs help with their homework, who can they turn to for help? (list people and relationship)
11. At this school, when students needs help with other types of help (food, housing, school supplies, problems with friends or family, etc.), who can they turn to? (list people and relationship)
12. How do the people you mentioned help these students?

Is there any other pertinent information that you would like to share?

## Appendix L: School Observation Protocol

### Exploring School Protective Factors Available to Youth Experiencing Housing Instability

Date	
Time of Observation	
School	
Specific Places Observed (use a separate protocol for each classroom observed)	

*The purpose of these observations is to find evidence of school protective factors available to homeless youth. Specific examples are listed below each category. These are provided to guide the researcher and should not be considered the only possible manner in which that protective factor could be evidenced.*

#### **Caring Adult and Peer Relationships—**

People within the school who: model empathy and compassion, are available and responsive, offer extra individualized help, model respect, get to know life context, get to know hopes and dreams, are flexible, create small and personalized groups, create opportunities for peer helping, create connections to resources.

#### **High Academic and Social Expectations—**

people within the school who: convey a "no excuses, never give up" philosophy," challenge and support, hold students accountable, use discipline that is consistent, strict, and fair, relate high expectations to family, and help family members see students strains, interests, and goals.

#### **Opportunities for Meaningful Participation and Contribution—**

School staff: infuse meaningful roles and responsibilities, offer peer group supports, cross age helping, peer helping, and community service.

Other examples include: extracurricular activities, clubs and organizations, and academic intervention.

## Appendix M: Document Analysis Protocol

### Exploring School Protective Factors Available to Youth Experiencing Housing Instability

Date	
Time of Analysis	
School	
Specific Document Analyzed (use a separate protocol for each document)	

*The purpose of these analyses is to find evidence of school protective factors available to homeless youth. Specific examples are listed below each category. These are provided to guide the researcher and should not be considered the only possible manner in which that protective factor could be evidenced.*

#### **Caring Adult and Peer Relationships—**

Documentation may include class grouping lists, school to home communication, information regarding peer or adult mentoring,

#### **High Academic and Social Expectations—**

Written information regarding counseling, adults and peer mentor in, college transition, vocational training, homework support curriculum offerings, school rules and expectations, safety, etc.

#### **Opportunities for Meaningful Participation and Contribution—**

Documentation including: clubs and organizations, extracurricular activities, community service, school governing boards, etc.

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