

Running head: EFFECTS OF HOMELESSNESS/HIGH MOBILITY ON ACADEMICS

THE EFFECTS OF HOMELESSNESS OR HIGH-MOBILITY  
ON A STUDENTS ACADEMICS

by  
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Certification Page

State University of New York at Fredonia  
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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

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### **Abstract**

This investigation examines the effects that high-mobility and homelessness have on the young homeless community. The research identified a workable definition of homelessness. Many different aspects can be included in the word homeless. This research looks into the academics portion of the children's lives from reading to math, and it looks out beyond academics at things such as school attendance and people involved in the child's life. This research looks at some of the social impact that homelessness and high-mobility have on a student, along with the emotional impact it has on the children suffering from it. Using the case study method, the researcher examined academic records of one homeless/highly mobile student. In studying the records, the researcher compared academic grades during the year or quarters when the student was identified as homeless with academic grades during the years they were housed. The researcher also looked at grade fluctuation directly after a move of a school and compared grading quarters during which the child was in one home with subsequent quarters during which they may have moved homes or school districts.

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## Introduction

Homelessness has been an issue for many years but the idea of how it affects students learning is a more recent focus of research. This research has been sparked by the more recent economic situations and housing issues that have been affecting families (Herbers, Cutuli, Supkoff, Heistad, Chan, Hinz, & Masten, 2012.) This topic is one that affects the United States but it is also pervasive throughout the world (Rumberger, 2003.) Many researchers have focused on the effects of homelessness on a specific group of children, a specific age of students, or on specific educational topics such as Reading or Mathematics. This research looked at an individual student's history of academics and compared years/quarters when he/she was homeless or highly mobile; to years/quarters, when he/she had a stable living environment.

The researcher has not had any personal experiences with homelessness up until she was student teaching and had multiple students that were currently or recently experiencing it. At that point, she still was unsure of how their experiences were affecting them in their school life and academics. Research shows that things that take place outside of school play a large role in a young person's educational development (Voight, Shinn, & Nation, 2012.) If teachers do not try to educate themselves or become aware of different issues affecting their student's life they cannot educate the student to the fullest of their ability because they may not have ever dealt with what the student is dealing with. Teachers have been told that if their students come in without the basic needs met they will have difficulty learning. For many students facing homelessness being homeless has affected them in getting their basic needs and in turn has affected their learning ( Herbers, et al., 2012.) It is the teacher's job to become educated on how the students' lives are being affected, so that they will know how to best educate and help students in the future.

Past research has shown that most of the homeless community was made up of adult males. Over the past several years, the numbers have been changing and the homeless population makeup is

what is changing the numbers. Now research shows that there are more women and children that are classified as homeless than adult males (May, Kundert & Akpan, 1994.) These changes started to happen in the 90's, but since the economic changes in the 2000's it has been affecting school children more making research specific to these topics increase (Herbers, et al., 2012.) Even over the short period that this researcher has been researching the topic she has seen more and more data and studies being released on the topic.

Now that more students are becoming homeless, it is more likely that teachers will have students facing these difficulties in their classes. In this researcher's experiences, teacher professional development has not been focused on homelessness. Homelessness is a newer topic that teachers should be researching. Research has been coming out about students in large cities, or in specific age groups. Teachers need to be able to look through the research and find out the key areas of concern and then talk about how to address those areas concerns. The researcher has seen many other research articles comparing the homeless student to their housed peers but nothing about how homeless student's academics are affected if they are in a stable living environment.

This research is a significant topic in that it is based on the belief that homelessness in one form or another is affecting students in school socially or educationally in an adverse way. In this research, the researcher hopes to see the difference in academic grades from one year to the next and try to see a gap in education for students, and to see if that gap is due to the fact, the child was homeless, moved schools, or other factors.

The investigator will be taking all of the data that has been collected about homelessness and the different forms of homelessness and identifying salient information that can assist teachers. Through this study, the researcher hopes to find the gaps and help teachers learn about what to expect when working with a student that is affected by various living situations. If teachers have some knowledge, about areas of concern they can plan and try to help students in those areas so they do not

fall behind. Homelessness may have major affects on students but if teachers can preplan for them, there is a possibility that teachers can lessen the educational gap between homeless and housed students, and help reduce movement from school to school, and help increase their academics.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review looks at research on the impacts that homelessness has on a students' academics such as Reading, Math, and achievement test scores. Along with their grades researchers looked at the influences on the student's school life such as attendance, retention rate, and the student's ability to stay engaged. Researchers looked at those parts of the student's life because each of those factors would have the potential to affect a student's ability to succeed in school.

Homelessness among women and children has been a growing issue in schools around the world including the United States of America (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Shields & Warke, 2010). The homeless majority had previously been made up of adult males (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011,) but "it was reported that families with children constitute the fastest growing segment of the homeless population," (May, Kundert & Akpan, 1994, 194.) Because of that, this topic is of growing interest in the field of education. When looking at the articles there was a growth of research in more recent years. Starting in 2003 articles were starting to come out more frequently (Rumberger.) Some of the articles were published in 2004 (Baggerly & Borkowski; Markos & Strawser; Rafferty, Shinn & Weitzman.) In 2007, Rhodes published an article, and then in 2011 a larger number of articles were being published (Aviles de Bradley; Hendricks & Barkley; Herbers, Cutuli, Lafavor, Vrieze & Leibel; Miller; Moore & McArthur; Powers-Costello & Swick.) We were also seeing many of the researchers working together to publish studies and reports. The numbers kept growing in 2012 (Culti, Desjardin, Herbers, Long, Heistad, Chan, Hinz, & Masten; Herbers et al.; Masten, Herber, Desjardins, Cutuli, McCormic, Spaienza, Long & Zelazo; Popp, Grant & Stronge; Voight, Shinn & Nation.) Even as recently as 2013 new articles are coming out on this topic because there is so much more to it than meets the eyes (Scherrer.) The growth of data is important because if more researchers are looking at it the more there is to learn, the more intriguing it becomes.

This topic was not only chosen because it is a growing issue. For a teacher, awareness about their students is an important part of being able to give them all of the knowledge and understanding they need to succeed in the future. If teachers know what is going on at home they are more aware of what is then affecting their learning in the classroom. Teachers also need to be educated and trained properly so that they know how to deal with, and help students in many situations including those that are homeless (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011.) In the researcher's education to become a teacher, she was taught how to differentiate instruction and how to teach her students, to the best of her abilities. Why then, would she not then learn about students that are being affected by homelessness and residential mobility?

When looking at the research the researcher is hoping to see the effects that homelessness or high mobility has on one single student's education and or educational life. She will look to see if there is a distinctive difference in their academics for years, where they were housed compared to years they did not have a stable living environment, or years they moved schools. She hopes to find overlap in the research to tie information together about students' academics and school culture.

### **Various Definitions of Homelessness**

There are many different forms of homelessness so many researchers began by operationalizing the word "homeless" for their study. Generally, they said that homelessness includes those who do not have a fixed or regular home, this includes those without an adequate night time residence (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004.) Being homeless no longer just means living under a bridge; it could mean living with different family members for an undetermined amount of time. It could mean living in a hotel for a few weeks or in a car, or with friends. Homelessness includes moving around a lot because that is not a fixed home and sometimes where they end up is not an adequate

residence. Due to the variety of definitions of the word homeless, it was important for the researchers to describe whom they included in their studies.

Along with homelessness comes movement. Moving of homes, places one may be staying and even schools. There is a high mobility rate associated with being homeless (Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) To be enrolled in a free public school one needs to have an address for a home within that school district. When students are starting out a new year at school, they have to have an address on file but come the next year if they have moved to another area or district they are then required to register in a new school district associated with that their new address. This movement from school to school affects students' academic performance (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004.) . One study even defined homelessness as mobility and mobility as a “non-promotional school change” (Rumberger & Larson, 1998, pg VI.) What that means is that homelessness does not mean they do not have a home, they have just moved from one home to another making them mobile. Mobile means that due to the movement of their home they had to change schools and or school districts, but not for the reason of being promoted into an upper grade. These movements take place throughout the year not just during the summer. They have large impacts on the students that move, students in the schools, and even the schools themselves (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; May, Kundert & Akpan, 1994.)

When researchers looked at highly mobile students, they looked at different types of mobility. One researcher said that a student moving from home to home is not always bad (Voight, Shinn & Nation, 2012.) If families are moving for job opportunities, promotion, or other positive reasons there is less stress on the student and their family making the move less detrimental (Voight, Shinn & Nation, 2012.) An example would be military families that move often all over the United States and even all over the world. In most cases, these moves are not detrimental to the family leaving this group of

highly mobile students out of the homeless definition. One researcher referred to that type of movement as residential mobility and compared it to that of low-income families who would be included in their study of the affects of homeless on students (Shafft, 2006.) Researchers admit that, residential instability is a disruptive experience for children and their families (Fatuzzo, LeBoeuff, Chen, Rouse & Culhane, 2012.) With instability may come breaks in the students' social ties and a brief interruption in their academic experiences. However, these breaks usually do not last because they are not combined with an already unstable home environment or other factors (Colton, 2004; Wood et al., 1993.) Students that move homes due to a positive factor usually can catch up academically, where other highly mobile students due to other factors may have more trouble to make up the material.

### **Academic Impacts**

Due to the movement of schools, students fall behind in classes. On average, every time a student moves to a new school they are set back anywhere from four to six months (Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011.) Many times student's records or paper work is not received by the new school, immediately affecting when students can start school. Students commonly change schools in the middle of the year (Miller, 2011.)

Curriculum or what the student is learning does not always align. The new school's curriculum could be ahead or behind the student's previous school and in some cases completely different topics might be introduced. In addition, they could be teaching the curriculum in different ways. Four to six months for every change of school could add up over the years setting students behind so far that they cannot make up the time loss. A major factor of a student's academic success is if they can catch up academically to their new school and peers but if a student faces multiple moves in a single school year it makes it more difficult. On top of that if, the student is facing other outside factors that are adding another obstacle in their way of success.

Students that are identified homeless or highly mobile are still expected to take state exams and follow school curriculum even if they have fallen behind. Many researchers found that students that fall into these groups received very low scores on academic or achievement tests that schools gave at the middle and end of the year (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.)

The fact that homeless students scored lower on the achievement tests correlates with the data that said that students that were identified as homeless or highly mobile and facing poverty scored lower on reading tests (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) Research shows that 42 percent of students that were identified as homeless were at or above grade level when it came to reading (Rafferty et al., 2004.) Not only were reading comprehension scores lower but most categories related to reading had lower scores. Literacy levels were lower (Moore & McArthur, 2011) along with fluency, vocabulary, and spelling sections (Rafferty et al., 2004.) Reading is a major part of a student's education, which affects all other subjects. In math, they have word problems, in science at the very least students have to be able to comprehend and follow safety directions and procedures. In Social Studies, students have to be able to read and comprehend the vocabulary of history, maps, and other information. Every subject, and almost every part of a student's school life will be affected by their ability to fluently read and understand what is around them.

In addition to looking at reading skills, many studies looked more into the students' math skills. Researchers found that the math skills for students that were identified as homeless were lower than that of their housed peers (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Moore & McArthur, 2011.) Math skills were affected by students' reading and seen to be affected by the student's engagement in the tasks. The students were having trouble focusing on what was being covered during the math lesson or connecting with the ideas being presented (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011.) One study showed that

28 percent of their group of homeless/highly mobile students tested at or above grade level in math (Rafferty et al., 2004.) That is an even lower percentage than their reading group. Another research study found that when a student was highly mobile in early grades their reading and math scores were greatly affected. Unexplainably, once in eighth grade those students reading scores were able to get back on track. Their math was still suffering because they lacked the ideas and knowledge they should have gained in earlier years, but did not due to lack of comprehension and reading skills (Voight, Shinn & Nation, 2012.) Math is a difficult subject to get a student caught up n because it builds upon itself and every lesson takes the previous lesson a step farther. With math, one skill needs to be mastered before going on to the next. Homeless/highly mobile students end up skipping steps and losing pieces to the puzzle due to moves or days missed.

Due to many factors affecting homeless students, the percentage of grade retention was much higher than their housed peers (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) Students were being held back due to their scores and grades in the majority of subject matters. Based on data some researchers felt that this was due to their lack of skills or abilities (Moore & McArthur, 2011.) One study even found that the likelihood that a homeless/highly mobile student would be held back was two times as high as others that were at the same grade level (Miller, 2011.) No one knows exactly if this was due to his or her movement of schools, the gaps of knowledge or what was taught, or the student's actual ability levels being lower than others are.

Studies found that forty-five percent of students that are labeled as homeless were not attending school regularly (Miller, 2011.) Other studies said that the decrease of student attendance affects their academics (Moore & McArthur, 2011.) If students are not at school they are not able to get the material they missed or make up for the knowledge received during the lessons that were covered that day. When students are not at school, they start to fall behind due to the lack of contact with their teacher

and the loss of educational time (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012.) It becomes more difficult for students to stay up to date on the lessons that the other students who are at school get. When students miss material, their grades are usually affected. Then due to the lower grades they become discouraged and start to miss school even more creating a cycle of bad grades and not coming to school (Phillips, 1997.)

Not only are students missing school, many studies found that even though students value their education (Moore & McArthur, 2011) they have a higher dropout rate (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Miller, 2011; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011, Rafferty et al., 2004.) One study even said that homeless students are less likely to make plans for future education (Rafferty et al., 2004.) None of the studies reviewed the percentage of homeless students that had graduated, nor did they discuss any students that went on for further education. Some studies did say that homeless students showed signs of getting frustrated with school and those students were starting to have behavioral problems (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011.)

Homeless/highly mobile students have a high percentage or high likelihood of being labeled as learning disabled (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011.) The topic is not adequately researched but there have been some studies that found overlap in individuals who were suffering from homelessness as adults and that were defined as having a disability such as mental illness, physical disabilities, medical disabilities or substance abuse (Markos & Strawser, 2004.) Similar to the rate of grade retention, homeless students were labeled learning disabled two times the rate of their peers (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004.) Research shows that when students experience frequent mobility they start to suffer from developmental delays in their speech and hearing that affect their learning also (Wood et al., 1993.) Due to those delays, students become eligible for special education, resulting in an increase in the identification of students (Miller, 2011.) One thing we do not know is the percentage of mislabeled students. Also, even though there are many cases of homeless/highly mobile students that are labeled as emotionally disturbed or having a disability there

has not been research on the direct cause of the disabilities to see if they are directly related to their housing(Malmgren & Gagon, 2005.)

In addition to being, learning disabled there is a higher rate of homeless students that are labeled as learning delayed (Moore & McArthur, 2011.) These identification levels could be similar to that of English Language Learners (ELLs). There is a high number of misidentified ELLs based on the sole fact they do not speak English. Similarly, the number of homeless student identified as learning delayed or disabled could also be high be due to the fact they have gaps of due to their movement of schools, not because they cannot learn or have trouble learning the information. Mobility affects each student differently but some researchers think it would give important information on a student if the schools look at their mental health when they enter a new school. The need to assess the mental health is not only due to the identification of disabilities but the association of being homeless/highly mobile and becoming depressed or highly agitated and acting out (Wood et al., 1993; Menke, 1998.) Acting out or having behavioral problems is another factor of students attendance and participation in their learning. If they act out and are removed from the class, they are missing more educational time and information putting them another step behind.

### **Social and Emotional Impacts**

Students that were homeless were also seen to be affected emotionally and socially in school with their peers (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herber et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004.) They have a lack of social networks resulting in a decrease of school experiences, and difficulties in school (Miller, 2011.) They find it hard to connect with their peers and even with adults. Students that are highly mobile lose friends when the move and have to start over in their new school. Even if they return to a school in years down the road, their relationships and bonds had already been broken so it is hard to reconnect. With the lack of

relationships, students may find it hard to fit in and may be less motivated to participate in school activities, whether they are extracurricular or group academic projects.

Some homeless students have negative social outcomes due to their lack of supplies and basic needs such as clothes or even a shower (Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012.) Students may look down upon or judge homeless students because of their hygiene, or because they do not have the most up-to-date clothing. That makes it hard for homeless students to come into a new school to build bonds with their classmates. Homeless/highly mobile students are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression that affects their work and participation in school (Herbers et al., 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004.) These studies found it important to talk about the other affects of homelessness on the students because these are all factors influencing student's academics. It is important to remember, however, that every child facing homelessness, or high mobility is different, and teachers need to know different approaches they can take to help those students become successful.

### **School Policies**

Many of the studies have found that students are finding it hard to stay engaged in schoolwork and activities (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011.) Student engagement is the process of making a psychological investment in learning and they try hard to learn whatever they can in school. Many students value their education and try hard to stay involved in the school day but sometimes they fall through the cracks and are left behind (Moore & McArthur, 2011.) When students come to school hungry or dirty, they cannot concentrate on what is being taught and cannot move past those basic needs: if those needs were met first there is a possibility that they could have a better chance to succeed in their academics (Popp et al., 2012.)

There is a lot more research out there now than in the past looking at how students are affected by their living condition, mainly being homeless, or a frequent mover. Being homeless affects the lives

of those labeled in every way. Academics of all forms, attendance, futures, and emotions are all part of what was looked at by researchers. All of which in one way or another were adversely affected by the one fact that the student did not have a stable living environment to go to once they left school but every study also had outside factors that those children had to face every day.

Every research study had implications for further research because there are many questions that could still be asked on the topic. Due to the relatively new higher percentages of students, being affected by homelessness there will be many questions and ways to research its effects on students' academics over the years. This is including how one student's grades may or may not be affected over the years, depending on their living situation, their family situation, and many other factors.

Research has shown that there are many different factors that affect a student's success in school. Homelessness and high mobility are major factors in predicting a student's success rate but they are not the defining factors. There are laws that are put in place to make sure students attend school and that families are held responsible for that (Julianell, Mabe, Reeg & Wolf, 2003.) However, what can schools do to help students stay in their school and keep them in a stable classroom if not a stable home?

Some research has started looking at schools that house highly mobile or homeless students and how their policies affect those students. They have started turning their focus on the school and their teachers (Scherrer, 2013.) Teachers are busy but making sure that every child gets a good education should be their first and most important goal. To do that, one researcher said schools need to stop putting the blame on the child's family for moving and start putting together school policies to assist the families and help them stay within the district (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1998.) These policies could help families figure out ways to participate in community events such as soup kitchens, or clothing drives, to work with community members to get the help their family needs.

Some schools have already started to think about outside sources they can bring in to help address issues such as physical or dental health. They bring in things such as the dental van every year where students can go to get their teeth examined and cleaned; or they bring in a doctor to do physicals- things that go beyond the normal classroom and create a school community (Scherrer, 2013.) These ideas go back to the thought that if a child comes to school hungry they cannot reasonably be expected to focus and learn. Researchers have started to understand that homelessness is only one factor that affects student's academics yet there is a lack of research on what the other contributing factors might be (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1998; Julianell et al., 2003; Scherrer, 2013.) The research focus is still on the direct affects of mobility and homelessness on students because there are so many questions to be answered.

### **What's missing?**

All of the students in these studies came from similar living areas and attended public schools (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) If the research did not take place within the school, it was gathered at a shelter that was located inside a large city (Herbers et al., 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011.) Some studies took place in both locations (Miller, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) None of the research reviewed involved students that were attending private schools or specified that they took place in a small school or rural setting.

There are many different people involved in the research studies. Most studies directly included students in some way (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2011; Herbers et al., 2012; Popp et al., 2012; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) Others included the teachers' views and ideas about how homelessness was affecting their students (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Herbers et al., 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011.) A few studies worked more with adults in the schools and even some outside

the school that had some connection or insight on the homeless/highly mobile student. These adults included the child's or the family's case managers, child protection personnel, childcare personnel and counselors (Moore & McArthur, 2011; Miller, 2011.) Some researchers included the views of the parents or other family members, such as older siblings, to examine how homelessness was affecting their child or sibling at school, both academically and socially (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Herbers et al., 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.)

Some researchers used formal tests such as standardized achievement tests to collect data (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Herbers et al., 2012; Herbers et al., 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) A standardized achievement test is a test that students take using the same process, which was set up previously to the test being given. The test is consistent for all students so that when the researchers receive the results from the tests they can compare one student's test data to the norm of the test. The data the researchers were focusing on were the scores of the students that were identified as homeless compared to the scores of their housed peers, that are in similar age and grade levels (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Herbers et al., 2012; Herbers et al., 2011; Rafferty et al., 2004.) All the studies compared the information of the homeless student against their housed peers in one specific year. None of them looked at the test scores of the same student across different years, from when that student was homeless to years when the student had a stable home.

In addition to the general standardized achievement test some researchers used a reading achievement test (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al., 2011; Herbers et al, 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004) or a math achievement test (Hendricks & Barkley, 2011; Herbers et al, 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004.) Similar to the standardized achievement tests a procedure was set up before the test was given so that everyone taking the test took it in the same way following the same rules. The difference is that the reading test measures the reading abilities and allows the person working with the data to place the student on a reading ability scale and compare one student's results to the norm of the data. The math

achievement test is set up in the same way as the other two, but tests just the math skills of the student. The reason to look at just the reading or just the math would be to see if the data changes by subject for the majority of students that are homeless compared to their house peers. However, these research studies only looked at the specific year that the student was homeless they do not see how the student performed in previous years. They look at the homeless or highly mobile student compared to their peers but they do not see how it affects that student from year to year.

Other than looking at data from tests, researchers also used interviews as part of their data collection (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Popp et al., 2012; Rafferty et al., 2004.) Interviews were a way to see how parents, teachers, adults working with the children, and in some cases, even the children themselves felt homelessness has affected the child in school. In addition to the interviews, a couple researchers used observation to see how homeless students acted during testing, and/or during instruction time compared to their housed peers (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011; Popp et al., 2012.) All of the research studies have compared the students to their peers; none compared the student to themselves and their academic success or struggles when they were housed or not mobile.

### **Methodology**

The research conducted was a case study looking at one specific student because that is an area that has not been researched previously. A case study allowed the researcher to look in depth at on student's history and compare homeless years to housed years. It did not look at one year of their education but instead it looked at six years of their education until the student's records ended. Background information such as specific years they moved, or years they attended a new school, have been examined to identify specific years they were homeless or years they moved frequently. The specific research question is, what is the difference in the student's academics in times they were defined homeless or highly mobile compared to the years they were not, and are there any other factors that are at play?

### **Participants**

When recruiting a participant, confidentiality and security was important. The high school principal had the school social worker identify a student that he/she has worked with in the past that has been highly mobile or homeless. That student's identification number was given to the researcher to work with, keeping the participants identity secured.

Previous to the selection of a student, the research discussed the definition of homelessness with the social worker. The researcher made sure she understood the working definition so that every participant had an equal chance of being selected. The final participant was selected by the social worker based on the number of year's recorded homeless, information the school has on the student, and the number of moves the child experienced in their childhood. Other participants were omitted because of gaps in the data due to school changes or a lack of background information. If the researcher did not know exact years that the student was homeless or mobile the grades and data could not be properly processed so that information was important.

The actual participant graduated from high school with in the last five years, but did not have to,

to participate he/she could have still been attending high school now if they were over the age of 18. Because the participant was, an adult the data collected on that student is still be valid because that student still fell under the label of highly mobile or homeless when they were attending school at some point. The reason the researcher used data for a student that is now a grown adult is that the researcher wanted to look back and be able to see the entire school academic history and possibly get information if the student dropped out or went on for future academics. This in this case was unknown. If the researcher was limited to only students, still in high school the researcher could be missing some information that could affect the results of their study.

### **Design**

The researcher was given some background information about the student such as years that he/she were mobile or homeless, family issues, attendance records, who the student lived with, and schools the student attended. All of that information was used when analyzing the data that the researcher collected. Another piece of information the social worker provided was that this student was not identified as having a disability at any point in his/her education but did need extra help.

Research has showed that homeless students have a higher identification rate of being labeled with a disability (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Markos, & Strawser, 2004; May, Kundert & Akpan, 1994; Miller, 2011; Moore & McArthur, 2011) so it was good for the researcher to see if this student was labeled. In this case, the researcher could not look at the correlation between when the student was labeled, when the grades may have begun to change, but she could look at the years the student was moving or homeless and other factors such as attendance on grades. All of that information gave important information to the researcher about the affects homelessness had on this student's academic experience.

After working with the school social worker, the researcher retrieved the student's academic history from the guidance office. There were no names or identifiable information given on the records

just some home and academic information. The files included all of the report cards for the student from kindergarten through grade six, when the students' information was transferred to a new school and the student did not return. Reports also included information on New York State exams in core areas. Some report cards included outside information about sports, clubs, and activities the student participated in or in some cases the lack of participation. All of which the researcher can keep in mind or use in the background information on the student. Other information collected included court papers about parental rights, notes to the school from the mother about concerns, school notes about academic concerns, attendance records, and even some health records. All of the information collected was examined to determine what other variables may have impacted the student's academic performances.

The researcher took the years/quarters that the student was identified as homeless or highly mobile and compared the grades they received to years or times the student was in a stable living environment. This data allowed the researcher to see if the movement or living situations correlated to the students' grades or academic performance, based on quarter averages and percentages. The researcher also looked at the student attendance rate and whom the student was living with at the time of grade changes to see if there was any correlation.

### **Setting**

The extant literature did not include examinations of multiple years of one student's education, so this was a gap in the research field. It is important to do this type of research study because it could give more information about how homelessness or high mobility correlates with a student's academic performance from year to year. It could inform the researcher if the impacts are immediate or develop over a span of years. Previous research also took place in large cities. This research was done in a small, rural public school (fewer than 400 students in the grades kindergarten through fifth) where the average class size is approximately 20 students.

This study was set up to maintain confidentiality, as the student's name or other identifying

information was not given or available to the researcher. There are alternative ways to research this topic but at this stage, this method seemed most appropriate and would be most successful in gaining the information the researcher was looking for.

## **Results**

First, the researcher selected the student with the help of the school social worker. After the selection of the student, the researcher went on to gather all of the information available on the student that was kept in school records. All identifiable information was withheld in order to maintain anonymity. After collecting all of the data from the school, the researcher organized and sorted through the information. All academic grades and other important information were compiled into a single document that allowed for ease of comparison. School names were color-coded so that moves could be easily identified; it was also noted when the student moved homes but stayed in the same school district. Attendance records for every quarter and comments made by teacher or parents and various events that took place in the child's life such as social services involvement and changes in the student's schedule due to health issues were also included in the document.

### **Participants**

The researcher first discussed different possible participants with the school social worker to identify one student that fit the definition of homeless and had the most information available. Two participants that met the working definition of homeless/highly mobile were eliminated because there were major gaps in their records due to their movement. The researcher selected this participant because his/her academic records were for the most part complete. Along with that, the participant's file contained information beyond academics. For example, the researcher was able to establish when the student moved from one school to another and, in some cases, whom the student was living with, and when they moved addresses, but stayed in the same school district.

In addition, there was more information about the student in school in his/her file, including interest surveys completed by the student. Those gave the researcher some insight about how the student perceived his/her own academics. Along with those surveys, there were the mother's comments on the student's report cards and notes that the mother sent into the student's teacher. Both positive and

negative feedback was given about the student's academics. Those also gave the researcher more information about what could be affecting the student during different parts of his/her education.

### **Movement and Academics**

The participant of this study was a highly mobile and at times homeless. His/her academics career started in kindergarten at School A. The student did not start the year out at this school, but instead transferred into it during the fourth quarter for the last ten weeks of the school year. It is unknown where the student was attending school prior to transferring to this school. Records showed that the student was doing satisfactory in all academic areas, as well as in social areas such as listening, group discussion, following directions and rules. At this point, of the student's academic career Rhyming was the only area that that teacher indicated needed improvement; all the other areas were progressing well including special areas such as Art, Music, and Physical Education.

#### **First Grade**

During first grade records showed that the student started the academic year off at School A, but soon left the school informing the school to where she would be enrolled. There was a note in the file that said the student moved two or three times this year and did not carry over previous schools information. Due to this, there are no grades on file at School B. School B is where the data on this student was gathered.

#### **Second Grade**

When the student started second grade he/she attended School A for at most three week before transferring to School, B. School B gave grade for all four quarters of the year. The first quarter was one that included a school and home movement for the student. In Reading, the student received a grade of "B" the first quarter and then increased to a "B+" in the second. In the third quarter it increased again to an "A-" then dropped on letter grade in the fourth quarter to a "B-." In math, the student received an "A", then slightly dropped to a "B+" and stayed into the "B-" range the rest of the

year. In spelling, the student started at “B+” and then increased to an “A,” but then went down to “B”, and further down to “C-” the last quarter of the year. English and Spelling followed a similar pattern, but handwriting stayed in the “Cs” the entire year. Social Studies and Science were both “S” or satisfactory grades.

### **Third Grade**

The student was in School B again for the entire third grade year. In Reading the first quarter, the student received an “A” and then dropped to a “B+” for the second and third quarter. In the fourth quarter, the student received a “B.” In Math the student received a “B+” the first and second quarter then increased his/her grade to an “A” in the third quarter before dropping on letter grade to a “B” in the fourth quarter. Spelling started as a “B+” increased to an “A” in the second quarter then dropped three whole letter grades in the third quarter to a “D.” In the fourth quarter, the student was able to bring his/her grade up one letter grade to a C. The student received a “B+” in English for the first quarter, but dropped to a “D” in the second quarter. In the third quarter, he/she increased her grade back to a “B” and then again increased it to a “B+” in the fourth quarter. For handwriting, the student maintained a “B” average the entire year and received Satisfactory scores on Social Studies and Science as well as in Art, Music, and Physical Education.

### **Fourth Grade**

The student went to School B the entire year. During this year, the student’s records showed that the student moved homes at least three times. The family moved once a semester until the fourth semester when there was not a move shown. Records showed that the student was moving from trailer to trailer in the same park, in the same school district. The first and second quarters the student received a “C+” in reading and then it went to a “C” in the third quarter and again dropped in the fourth quarter to a “C-.” Spelling had a similar patter where the student received a “D” the first two quarters and improved his/her grade to a “B-” in the third quarter but dropped slightly to a “C+” in the fourth

quarter. The student was receiving a limited spelling list where the teacher gave a reduced number of words the student was accountable for and tested on. English was consistent at a “C+” the first two and last quarter of school. The third quarter was slightly lower at “C.” In Math, the student received a failing grade the first three quarters but then increased his/her grade to a “C” in the fourth quarter.

This was the first year Social Studies and Science received separate letter grades. In Social Studies the student received a failing grade the second and third quarter with a “C” the first quarter, and then increased three letter grades to a “B” the fourth quarter. Science received a “B-” the first quarter and a “B” the second. Then it dropped to an “F” in the third quarter and “C” in the fourth quarter. Handwriting was slightly below satisfactory all year long. During the first quarter, the student failed math, during the second the student failed two math and social studies, then during the third quarter he/she failed math social studies and science. Fourth, quarter no classes were failed, but the school and parents decided to retain the student.

#### **Fourth Grade (Retention year)**

The student was retained by School B and stayed there for the first quarter and part of the second quarter. Then the student moved to School C. Due to the move in the middle of a quarter, there were no grades given to the student in the second quarter by School B or School C. School B gave letter grades and in all areas of the first quarter the student received “B+,” other than writing where it was marked as “improving”. When the student received grades from School C, they were given in a number range. In Reading, the student earned a grade in the high 80s for the third and fourth quarters. In Writing, he/she received low 80s in the third quarter but increased to high 80s for the fourth quarter. Spelling was one of the highest grades where the student revived high 90s the third and low 90s in the fourth. In Math, the student received low 80s in the third and increased to the high 80s in the fourth quarter. Similarly, Social Studies grades were in the low 80s in the first quarter but jumped to the low 90s in the fourth quarter. Science was in the high 80s and then high 90s.

### **Fifth Grade**

In fifth grade, the student started the year at School C for the first quarter then transferred back to School B for the last three quarters. In Reading the student earned a grade in the high 80s in the first and second quarters, and then earned a 93 the third and dropped ten points to a 83 the fourth quarter. Writing was given a grade in School C but not School B so the student's grade was a high 80 the first quarter. Spelling was high 70s the first quarter and dropped to 65 when moved to School B. The student's spelling grade then increased in the third quarter to a 69 and dropped back to a 65 the final quarter. Math was in the low 80s the first quarter, then also decreased when there was a move of schools to School B. The student went from low 80s to 77, then 79, then 65 to finish the year. Social studies stayed about the same in the high 70s, until the fourth quarter when it dropped to 65. Science was given a grade in School B but was left blank on the report card for School C. The student received an 87, 75, and then 78, which were lower than the previous years at School C. Terra Nova scores showed that the student tested in the average range across all areas that were tested

### **Sixth Grade**

The student attended School C for part of the first quarter, until the end of October, and then transferred back to School B. Also, while enrolled in School B the student's home moved again to another trailer in the same trailer park.. There was a move between the second and third quarters and then again between the third and fourth quarters.

School B used some of the grades from the previous school for the first quarter because the student was not there for most of it. In English the student received a 93 the first quarter then dropped to a 21 the second quarter when moved to School B. For the third quarter in School B the student earned a 74 and then a 60 in the fourth quarter receiving a 45 on the final exam. For Math, the student received a 78 the first quarter and then was not given a grade the rest of the year due to the amount of classes missed. In the first quarter the student earned a 65 in Social Studies, and that dropped to a 42

the second quarter, then went up to 53 in the third, but dropped back a 50 in the fourth quarter. The student earned a 50 on the final exam in Social Studies. In Science the student earned a 50 the first quarter, dropped one point to a 49 the second quarter, and then increased to a 70 the third quarter, decreased again to a 58 the fourth quarter receiving a 45 on the final exam. In the first quarter, the student earned a 92 in Library and an 89 in Physical Education. In the second quarter, the student was excused from Physical Education due to medical leave; the student instead took Technology where he/she earned a 38. During the third quarter the student returned to Physical Education and received an 85, and also took Music for which he/she earned a 76. The student did not receive fourth quarter grades for other classes than the main core classes.

### **Attendance**

There were many times that the student's attendance was noted on his/her reports. Starting in Kindergarten the student missed 14 days of school and was late 5 days. This did not seem to affect academic performance because the student received all "satisfactory" grades.

In second grade the student was earning mostly "As" and "Bs" the first three quarters and was absent on average five days a quarter and never tardy. The fourth quarter of third grade showed a decrease in grades to "Bs" and "Cs," and the student was absent 8 days and late five other days.

In third grade, the student was in the "A" and "B" ranges the first quarter, only missing one day and late two days. Entering the second quarter the student missed 8 days and three class grades dropped. One class grade increased and one stayed the same in the second quarter, but then remained about the same with only one dropping farther the third quarter when the student was absent 7 days.

Once the student was in fourth grade the number of absences in the first half of the year remained around 8 days per quarter with an additional one day tardy per quarter on average. The student's grades did not increase from the previous year but started out in the "C" and "D" ranges and did not improve. During the second half of the year the number of absences decreased to three per

quarter, while grades remained in the as “C”s and “F”s until the fourth quarter, when they increased to “C”s and “B”s.

The second time though fourth grade the student was absent seven days the first quarter but earned Bs in all subjects. After the student moved schools in the second quarter, the rest of the year the student missed an average of six days and was tardy two days per quarter, yet received mid 80s to high 90s. Grades were similar in both schools, but did increase when the student attended School C and the number of days absent decreased.

In fifth grade, the attendance was not available for the first quarter when the student was enrolled in School C, but when the student moved back to School B for the second quarter he/she missed 11 days. There was a slight decrease in some of the student’s grades. In the third quarter when the student was absent 6 days, his/her grades slightly increased again. Then in the fourth quarter, the student’s grades decreased again and the student was absent two days.

During the students sixth grade year he/she missed a large amount of days. Every teacher noted that student was excessively absent. In the first quarter, when the student transferred over to School B, the student missed 11 days. In the second quarter, the student missed a total of 44 days and there was a large decrease in grades over all. In the third quarter, the student was absent 11 days and grades increased from the previous quarter. The student was absent 8 days the fourth quarter and grades were about the same as the previous quarter. The records included a doctor’s note, dated January of that year, saying that he/she was to attend school for only half days. Then in March, there was another note saying that the student could return to school for three full days and two half days.

### **Parent/Teacher Comments**

When the student attended School A, the teachers noted that the student was adjusting well to the classroom change. They noted that he/she was making progress in his/her academic skills and that the student knew a number of skills that a kindergartener should know before moving on to first grade.

In first grade, teachers commented in the beginning of the year that the student was hard working and respectful towards peers and adults. In the middle of the year the classroom teacher noted that the student was having trouble catching on work because he/she missed so many assignments due to being absent, which continued to be a problem in the fourth quarter.

In third grade, the student started the year out with comments that he/she was very cooperative but during the second quarter the teacher started to express concerns about the student becoming careless in completing assignments. The student's mother contacted the school to request assignments that were missed or that could be made up to keep him/her on track. In the third quarter, the teacher commented that some areas had improved, but Spelling was still a concern. The parents responded that it was hard to get the student to cooperate and work on Spelling at home.

When the student entered fourth grade the teacher started noting that the student's effort was unsatisfactory in multiple areas. The teacher noted that there was great struggle in many areas and that assignments were not being completed. Similar to previous teachers, this teacher noted that the number of days absent were a concern, and that the student could not make up missed work. Early in the year, the parent told the teacher that the student had given up on school and was not trying anymore. In the second quarter, the teacher assigned the student to homework hall to complete homework and class assignments, but the student still needed to work at home. The parents said that they are working on math at home but they were not having any luck. In the third quarter, the teacher commented that there was an improvement in attitude and effort being made by the student to complete homework and tests, but that math was still a struggle. The parents again expressed concerns that the student would not complete work at home. The last quarter the teacher noted improvements but stated that the student continued to struggle and was visibly stressed. There were two legal notices sent home to the parents about the student's attendance.

When the student entered fourth grade for the second time, the teacher at School B noted that

there had been great improvements since the last year. When the student transferred over to School C in the second quarter, the teacher noted that the student had a great attitude towards school and completing schoolwork. At the end of the year, the teacher noted that there had been improvements in math over the year, but the student needed to continue working on math facts during the summer.

There was not much communication documented in fifth grade between teachers and home, except that of concern to absences. In Sixth grade, there was also not much communication between the parents and the school other than doctor's notes and court/legal documents.

### **Other Factors**

Over the course of the seven years examined for this study, other factors could have played a role in the student's academic performance. In kindergarten, before records showed the student enrolled in School A, it is unknown where the student was. Documents showed the child living with both parents when the student was enrolled in School A. At that, time academics were satisfactory.

In first grade, there were many moves and documents showed the student was living with one parent for part of the year and with both for other parts of the year. In second grade the school requested social services involvement with the family. There was a record of the student living in a shelter at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year. The student's grades were slightly lower in the beginning and end of the year. Documents stated that student lived with both parents.

Social services continued to be involved with the family in third grade and though out the following years. In fourth grade, the student moved into a home with both parents. In the second quarter at some point, the student moved into a new home with his/her siblings and both parents, and his/her grades decreased. Everyone moved in the third quarter, but in the fourth quarter the child and the mother moved without the father, and the student's grades improved. Siblings were living with them part of the time based, according to documentation.

When the student repeated fourth grade he/she was living with the mother. Later, when they

moved into the School C district the student was living with the mother and another adult family member. The student's grades were higher than the previous year. Similar living situations were in fifth grade until the fourth quarter when it was documented that the mother's boyfriend was living in the home with the siblings. Overall, the student earned lower grades this year after the move, compared to the previous year. In sixth grade, the mother's boyfriend was in the home the first quarter but in October, there was a court hearing involving both parents, a law guardian, and the mother's boyfriend; Family Court was investigating a neglect case against the mother and boyfriend. The court found that the children could stay in the custody of the mother as long that there was no contact with the boyfriend. There was an order of protection put into place forbidding any contact whatsoever between the mother's boyfriend and the children. That order was to be enforced by the mother; if there was contact the mother would be in violation of the court. Records indicated a drop in grades during this time period.

### **Discussion**

These results provide initial evidence that homelessness/high mobility paired with other factors facing a family or child has detrimental effects on a student's academics. When the student experienced a move by itself, the effects were not always seen as a decrease in academic scores. When the move was paired with additional factors (in this case of the father coming and going from the home) there was a pattern in the student's grades decreasing. Along with the pattern in the grades, attendance fluctuations during those times were present.

Many things appear to have affected this student. The fact that the student moved 14 times, that the school has on record, in eight years is one major factor that may contribute to the challenges he/she had in school. At times, the student was living with a combination of different people. They included family members, his/her father and up to four younger siblings. The analysis of student records and academic performance were no longer based exclusively on whether the student was housed or homeless, but was based more on whether the student had a stable living environment. Even when the student was housed for a year, if the people in the home changed, changes in the student's academics were evident. This data therefore supports the hypothesis that homelessness and the lack of a stable living environment has detrimental effects on students' academics.

#### **Movement Affects Academics**

One researcher stated that the students that were affected by homeless or high mobility had persistently lower academic scores than their housed peers who lived in a stable living environment (Culti et al., 2012.) In addition, researchers have seen that high mobility affects students that fall in the homeless category because of not only their movement but also that they are affected by poverty or other family issues (Isernhagn & Bulkin, 2011.)

In second grade, for the most part, the student's grades had a slight increase from the first semester, when he/she moved into the school, to the second quarter where he/she was in the school

district the entire time. The slight decreases in the third and then again in the fourth quarters are not explained by school movement. While that may contradict, the research of movement adversely affects students academics, it that does not take into account other things covered by the definition of homelessness.

The third grade Reading grades were similar to those received the previous year when the student was housed in the same home and attending the same school district. The student did slightly better in Math the first three quarters than he/she did the previous year until the drop in the third quarter of third grade. In third grade, there was no house or school move on record to account for the grade shift that happened in the third and fourth quarters. Overall, the student had similar grades compared to the previous year until the decrease in the third quarter. On average, even the semester the student moved into the school district, the student received "Bs." When the student's English grade dropped in the second quarter, the parent did contact the school asking for assignments that could be made up to help the student's grade. Compared to the previous year when the student moved in the first quarter the student's handwriting grades improved for the entire year. This stable year the student's academics were slightly higher than years when the student had a move; the decrease in the end of the year that could have been due to other factors.

When the student completed fourth grade for the first time there were at least three moves and different people the student was living with. Overall, there was a decrease in grades from the fourth quarter of third grade to the first quarter in fourth grade. The largest drop was in Math where the student went from a "B" to an "F." Even though the moves were to a different home in the same park, they seemed to have an effect on the student academics. For the first three quarters of fourth grade the student moved homes and there was a slight shift in most of his/her grades. The shift was a decrease in grades in most cases.

When the student completed fourth grade for the second time he/she started the year out much

higher than he/she ended the previous year. In the second quarter when the student moved to School C his/her grades stayed in the same range or increased. During the fourth quarter all but one class's grade increased. This showed that the student made academic growth and was more academically successful. When moving into the School C district there were no adverse affects on the student. Actually just the opposite. The move seemed to do the student good.

In fifth grade, the student moved after the first quarter grades were given. Directly after the move, two class grades stayed the same the immediate semester after the move and two of them dropped. Special classes such as Art, Music, and Physical Education also were similar, but decreased slightly. Those decreases were attributed to absences from classes and not being able to make up the work. There was another drop in grades in the fourth quarter compared to the semester the student moved. Even though there was not a move seen here, there was another change in who was living in the home.

The student started his/her sixth grade year out in School C. Grades were similar to the end of the previous year but much lower than the last time the student attended School C. The family moved in the end of the first quarter back to School B and the second quarter (students first full one in School B) grades dropped even more. They increased in the third quarter when the student did not move, leading the researcher to believe the move was detrimental to the student's academics.

### **Outside Factors Affects Academics**

Some researchers have looked at how outside factors can affect students' academics, instead of solely attributing the student's academic struggles to being homeless. They felt that the academic struggles fell in conjunction with each other instead of being a direct affect of one factor (Masten, Miliotis, Graham-Bermann, Ramirez & Neeman, 1993; Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Rumberger, and Larson (1998) found that if all of the socioeconomic factors are removed, but a child moves from one school to another, the effects will continue to be detrimental for the student.

Interestingly, this was stated in early research and then seemed to be abandoned in future research, which then went on to look at the effects of homelessness and mobility as one co-variables, and not at school mobility in itself. Research rarely looked at how to help students stay in their home school and with their peers even if they are suffering from socioeconomic factors or homelessness. In more recent years researchers have started to find interest in reducing children's risks within schools, but it has only been seen stated in future needs (Masten et al., 2012; Rhodes, 2007; Scherrer, 2012.)

In second grade, there was an increase in grades following the semester the student moved into the school, but a decrease in the fourth quarter that was not explained by a move. However, there was an increase in the number of days absent during the fourth quarter. The number of absences increased to eight days and the student was tardy five days. In this case there was no information collected to explain that change in attendance and then in academics. However, the increase in days missed or tardy seemed to coincide with the slight decrease in grades over all major academic areas.

When the student was in third grade, even though there were no house/school changes, his/her grades seemed to decrease in the third and fourth quarters. Similar to second grade, at that same time in the second quarter and third quarter, the student's attendance began to decrease. The student was missing seven or eight day in the second and third quarters; the number of absences in the fourth quarter is unknown. At this time in the student's life, there were notes in the his/her file that showed social services being involved with the family. The reason for their involvement at this time was not indicated.

In fourth grade other than just moving homes, who was in the home was also changing. When the student was living with only the mother in the started out the year, he/she missed eight days of school and was late three days. There was a noticeable drop in grades from the previous year. In the second quarter the student and his/her mother moved into a home with the father and four younger siblings. The student was absent seven days and grades again decreased. In the third quarter, the father

moved out with one or two of the siblings, leaving the child and two or three other siblings in a new home with the mother. The student's attendance increased and he/she only missed three days, but the academics continued to become worse, dropping three grades to an F. In the fourth quarter with no move or change in who was in the house the students grades all increased to Bs and Cs. The stability of the home in this quarter led the researcher to believe that it had an effect on the student's ability to complete work and increased the over all grades. Even though the student's grades increased in the fourth quarter, the student was retained to repeat fourth grade again.

During the student's second time through fourth grade he/she moved in the second quarter. He/she went from living with the mother and one or two siblings to them all living with another adult family member. The number of days absent from school when attending School C decreased from an average of 7 days per quarter to an average of 5 days per quarter.. The student's grades increased a great deal compared to the previous year attending School B and having different people come in and out of the home accompanied by changes in the address.

The student was living with the mother, siblings, and another adult family member for the first quarter of fifth grade. Grades were slightly lower this quarter compared to the fourth quarter the previous year, but when the student moved out of the home with the family member and went back to School B his/her grades decreased even more. The student missed 11 days of school when he/she moved into the new home and attended School B again. During the first quarter, the student was living with the mother, and his/her siblings were also living there for part of the time. The second quarter the siblings were there more of the time and there was another adult male living in the family home with them.

Sixth grade was the last year that School B had on file for the student. He/she attended School C then moved to School B at the end of the semester. The following quarter, the student missed 44 days of school. There were papers in the student's records showing social services filing for neglect against

the student's parents. This same quarter there were court papers for neglect against the mother's boyfriend and the court ruled that there was to be no contact between him and the children. He was previously living in the home with the student and his/her mother and siblings and then moved out. The second quarter grades for the student were the lowest seen in his/her academic history. When the student came to school in the end of the second quarter he/she was accompanied by a note from a doctor saying that it would be for half days only. Then in the middle of the third quarter the student was instructed by his/her physician to attend three full days and two half days per week. During the fourth quarter the student returned to full days. The school gave the student a tutor but he/she still missed a lot of academic time, which had a significant impact on his/her academics.

### **Limitations**

Findings from this study confirmed that the instability of homelessness or high mobility have impacts on a student's academic performance. However, one student's situation is often completely different from another student's situation. For the student in this study, there was a high volume of moves, not only from district to district, but also to homes within the same district. This study examined a student's file of information and did not take any information from other school sources or teacher sources that knew the student. The research was limited to what was saved by School B in the school's records. It did not include any other information that may have been attained in other school districts. If the research extended itself to School A records or School C records, there may have been more insight to what was going on in the student's life when attending those schools.

The case study design of this research looked into one student's academic career to see how moves and instability affected his/her grades. If the researcher could have been in contact to the student and situations could have been explained there could have been more added to the study, such as why the student could only attend school half days, or how often tutors worked with the student outside of school. More situations could have been explained and accounted for when processing the data.

The final limitation of the study was that there was some data missing from the file. In kindergarten, it was unknown where the student was before the fourth quarter. The information stated that the student adjusted well into the new classroom and had shown progress but it did not contain any information on what came before entering into School A. Similarly, in first grade the student had a large number of moves recorded. There again was no academic information on file for that entire year. It was unknown if the student attended one school that year or many schools. It is even a possibility that the student did not have the opportunity to attend school, but that information is unknown, leaving a whole year of academic data unavailable.

Following first grade, every year was accounted for up until sixth grade when the student moved from School B, but it is unknown where the student went. That left six additional years of data out of the student's history. It did not affect the study a great deal because the researcher was able to follow the student and his/her academics for about eight years, but that additional data could have made the research even more comprehensive. In addition, because the student's high school data was not available, it unknown to the researcher if the student graduated from high school. This was another factor of a student's life that research showed to be affected by homelessness and high mobility, so that data could have yielded more information for this study.

In addition to entire school years that were left out of the file, when the student moved from one school to another, some quarter grades were left out or attendance records were left out. Instead of seeing immediate changes, the researcher was forced to look at the next quarter changes. It would have been beneficial to see those immediate changes.

### **Further Research**

This present findings support the hypothesis that instability in the home life, such as homelessness, high mobility and other factors, affects students' academics. The researcher followed one student and showed that when there were major changes going on at home the student's school life

was affected in different ways. The results of this study were similar to those of other studies, but different because the researcher found that not only were the moves detrimental in some ways to the student, but also that in some cases they actually increased the student's academics allowing him/her to succeed.

The participant's academic grades changed not only based on the move, but also based on who was moving with him/her. In addition, where the student moved affected the his/her academics also. Another factor was the student's attendance in school. For this participant it was a huge factor. The more days missed the lower the grades seemed to be, despite the fact that there was a tutor going to the home at times.

It is time to start moving beyond research about whether homelessness affects students' academics, to researching things schools can do to move forward and help students deal with the affects of homelessness, and to help reduce the probability of school mobility (Scherrer, 2012.) One research study stated, "Research reveals that they believe there is little that can be done about the problem because its roots in housing instability, poverty, divorce, and other family issues that are beyond the control of the schools." (Rhodes, 2007, p. 1) Where in reality it is not completely beyond the schools' control; they are partially responsible for the high mobility rates of student (Rumberger & Larson, 1998.) School can also affect a student's attendance rate by taking steps to get the student there on time or there at all.

Rhodes (2007) also stated that many researchers are not even aware that nearly half of the changes of schools students and their families make are not based on poverty and housing instability but due to district policies and practices. The other half may be due to homelessness and poverty but there is still a large percent of students being affected by mobility issues due to the schools, and every time a student moves they are still faced with the academic challenges that a student of poverty or homelessness face.

Schools can start looking at their policies for retention or failure and consider alternatives. They can start researching the root of not completing assignments. Research can look at what steps schools can take to help students be involved at school and want to be there, even if there are outside factors making it difficult for them.

This research and data collection have shown the researcher that the definition of homeless is very important. If the definition only included the move of homes or loss of homes, this research would have had very different results. Since the working definition of homelessness includes unstable living conditions for the student, which includes people in the home and other factors, it was important for the researcher to look into other things going on in the student's life. When the moves are paired with other factors in the student's life, there are more connections that can be seen. In addition, there are more reasons for the student's fluctuation in grades than just school moves alone.

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## **Appendix**

**Appendix A: Kindergarten Report of Academics**

Student2345-13					
N-Needs improvement	A- Superior B-Above Average C-Average D-Below Average				
I- Improving In-inconsistent F- Unsatisfactory S Satisfactory E-Excellent					
97 – 98 Kindergarten					
	School A				
	Attendance	10- N/A	20- N/A	30- N/A	40- 14 Ab 5-Tardy
Language Arts	Interests in stories				S
	Sequencing				S
	Rhyming				n
	Letter names				S
	Letter Sounds				S
Math	Recognition of #s				S
	Counting				S
	Counting to 100				S
	Simple patterns				S
Social	Listening				S
	Group Discussion				S
	Follow directions				S
	Starts and Finishes				S
	Follows Rules				S
	Respect others				S
	Care of materials				S
	Personal needs				S
*Knows her address, phone number, days of week, seasons, colors, shapes and can tie a bow					
*adjusting well to the classroom and has shown progress in academic skills					
*Art Music and Phys Ed all gave S and E's					

**Appendix B: First and Second Grade Report of Academics**

98 – 99 First					
	School A	*No grades available- moved 2-3xs this year			
Attendance	10- N/A	20- N/A	30- N/A	40- N/A	

99 – 00 Second					
* Social Service request	School A	*Just Started the year. Went to Brocton a few weeks in			
Attendance	10- N/A	20- N/A	30- N/A	40- N/A	
*Record of living in a shelter in the beginning of the year and possibly at the end	School B				
Attendance	10- 1 Ab 0 Tardy	20- 7 Ab 0 Tardy	30- 6 Ab 0 T;	40- 8 Ab 5 Tardy	
Reading	B	B+	A-	B-	
Math	A	B+	B-	B-	
Spelling	B+	A	B	C-	
English	B+	A	B	C+	
Hand writing	C+	C	C	C	
SS/Science	S+	S+	S+	s	
10- Cooperative, respectful and hardworking.					
20- All is well					
30- Having trouble catching up because of Attendance					
40- Still had trouble catching up due to Attendance					
*Art Music and Phys Ed all gave S and E's					
*Terra Nova shows student is below average in Word Analysis, Math, Math computations, Math Composite, and Science					

**Appendix C: Third Grade Report of Academics**

00 – 01 Third				
School B				
Attendance	10- 1 Ab 2 Tardy	20- 8 Ab 0 Tardy	30- 7 Ab 0 T	40-Not Available
Reading	A	B+	B+	B
Math	B+	B+	A	B
Spelling	B+	A	D	C
English	B+	D	B	B+
Hand writing	B	B	B	B
SS/Science	S	S	S	s
10- Sweet and Cooperative		*Papers showing Social Services involvement		
20- Careless English Work (parents asks for make up assignments to keep student on track)				
30- (Parent is having hard time getting student to work on spelling)				
*Art Music and Phys Ed all gave S and S+				
*Terra Nova Shows student is above average in Reading skills but below in Mathematics				

**Appendix D: Fourth Grade Report of Academics**

01 – 02 Fourth					
*Retained (Letters about attendance sent home)			School B		
Attendance	10- 8Ab 3 Tardy	20- 7 Ab 0 Tardy	30- 3 Ab 0 T	40-3 Ab 0 Tardy	
Reading	C+	C+	C	C-	
*Reduced #	Spelling	D	D	B-	C+
	English	C+	C+	C	C+
	Math	F	F	F	C
	Social Studies	C	F	F	B
	Hand writing	S-	S-	S-	s
	Science	B-	B	F	C
*Effort was unsatisfactory in multiple areas through out the year.					
10- Struggling in most areas, needs to complete assignments and absences make make up hard (Parent says student has given up)					
20-Is assigned to Homework hall to complete assignments but needs to work at home also (Parent says that they are working with student on math but no luck)					
30- Showing more effort with HW and Tests but math is a struggle (Parent says they cant get the student to work at home)					
40- Made improvements but still is struggling and stressed					
(Could see one move 1 2, and 3rd semester in the same district but with different family members in The same park each time with a different lot # No move the fourth semester seen )					
*2 legal notes home about attendance and how it is affecting students academics					
*Art Music and Phys Ed all gave S and E's but marked concerns about attendance					

**Appendix E. Fourth Grade Repeated Report of Academics**

02 – 03 Fourth					
	School B	School C 1/3/03			
Attendance	10- 7 Ab 0 Tardy	20- N/A	30- N/A	40(Total) 18 Ab 6	
instructional Level		5th- 1	4th-2	4th-2	
Reading	B+	too short	85-89	85-89	
Writing	Improving	too short	80-84	85-89	
Spelling	B+	too short	95-100	90-94	
Math	B	too short	80-84	85-89	
Social Studies	B+	too short	80-84	90-94	
English	B+				
Science	B+	too short	85-89	95-100	
*Great improvements since last year					
*Great attitude towards school					
Entered school on Jan 3, two weeks before end of making period					
Adjusted well for new school					
*Needs to continue to work on her math facts during the summer but there has been improvements					
*Art Music and Phys Ed are unavailable					

**Appendix F: Fifth Grade Report of Academics**

03 – 04 Fifth			
	School C (1 <sup>st</sup> Q)	School B (2 <sup>nd</sup> Q)	
Attendance		20- 11 Ab 1 T	30- 6 Ab 1T 40- 2 Ab 0 T
Reading	85-89	88	93 83
Writing	85-89		
Spelling	75-79	65	69 65
Math	80-84	75	78 75
Social Studies	75-79	77	79 65
Science		85	86 78
English		87	75 78
*Did Well in Art, music and Phys ED			
*Art Music and Phys Ed all gave S and N due to Absences			
*Terra Nova Shows student is average in all areas tested			

**Appendix G: Sixth Grade Report of Academics**

04 – 05 Sixth					
	School C 10-24	School B			
Attendance		10- 11Ab 1-T	20- 44Ab 2 T	30- 11 Ab 1 T	40- 8 Ab 4 T
English	93	93	21	74	60 and 45 on exam
SS	65	65	42	53	50 and 50 on exam
Science	50	50	49	70	58 and 45 on exam
Math	78				40 and 85 on exam
Reading	89	No Grade		94	
Music	INC			76	
Technology			38		
Library		92			
Art					87
PE		89	MED	85	85
*Excessive absences recorded by all teachers					
*Multiple addresses					
Same park different Lot # for some					
*Court papers for neglect					
*3/30 could return to school full days and 2 1/2 days					
*1/5 could go 5 1/2 days a week					
Terra Novas show below average in Language, and Language Comprehension the rest are average					

**Appendix H: CITI Certification**  
**CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative**

**Human Research Curriculum Completion Report**

**Printed on 11/28/2012**

**Learner:** April Tye (username: tye3647)

**Institution:** SUNY- College at Fredonia

**Contact** Department: Education

**Information** Phone: 7167929601

Email: [tye3647@fredonia.edu](mailto:tye3647@fredonia.edu)

**Group 1.:**

**Stage 1. Basic Courses Passed on 10/23/12 (Ref # 9038194)**

Required Modules	Date Completed	
Introduction	10/23/12	no quiz
History and Ethical Principles –SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects –SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences – SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences – SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent –SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality –SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners – SBR	10/23/12	4/4 (100%)
Research with Children –SBR	10/23/12	4/4 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools –SBR	10/23/12	4/4 (100%)
International Research –SBR	10/23/12	3/3 (100%)
Internet Research –SBR	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
Avoiding Group Harms: U.S. Research Perspectives	10/23/12	3/3 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects – Research Involving Workers/Employees	10/23/12	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	10/23/12	5/5 (100%)
SUNY Fredonia State College	10/23/12	no quiz

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your instructor.**

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.  
 Professor, University of Miami  
 Director Office of Research Education  
 CITI Course Coordinator

Return

**Appendix I: Human Subjects Approval**

12-9-13

Dr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Tye:

Your request for review of "Effects of homelessness or high mobility on a student's academics" has been determined exempt under campus policies. It is understood you will work with unidentifiable aggregate data only.

Thank you for keeping the high standards relating to research and the protection of human subjects on the Fredonia campus.

Catherine N Kilpatrick  
catherine.kilpatrick@fredonia.edu