

Western School of Science and Technology

Homeless Education Policy

Board Approval Date: 9/12/24

This policy is intended to direct compliance with Arizona State Laws and Arizona Administrative Code and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 and should be read as consistent with those documents.

Western School of Science and Technology will comply with the above laws by:

- Immediately enrolling homeless students regardless of missing documentation.
- Ensuring homeless children are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless.
- Providing transportation to and from the "school of origin."

Definitions

The term "homeless students" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- Students 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;
- Students 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;
- Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory students who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above.
- The term "school of origin" means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.
- The term "unaccompanied youth" includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Liaison for Homeless Students

The school's designated Homeless Liaison is the liaison for homeless students who will carry out duties as assigned. Among those duties will be the responsibility to coordinate activities and programs in the best interest of homeless students that will include but not be limited to establishment of procedures to:

- Identifying homeless children and youth as identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- Keeping school personnel aware of pertinent issues
- Ensuring that identified homeless children and youths are enrolled in school and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed.
- Ensuring that identified homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible including referrals to health care services, dental services, and mental health services (Arizona Early Intervention Program).
- Ensuring that the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Disseminating public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths.
- Mediating enrollment disputes.
- Informing the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth of all transportation services to the school and assisting with providing these services.
- Reporting to the State Coordinator for Homeless Education necessary information to assess the educational needs of homeless children and youth at Western School of Science and Technology.

Best Interest of the Homeless Student

In determining the best interest of the homeless student, the school shall:

- To the extent feasible, keep a homeless student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's parent or guardian;
- Provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the homeless student's parent or guardian, if the homeless student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian; and
- In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison for homeless students shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions, considering the views of such unaccompanied youth, and providing notice to such student of the right to appeal.

- Provide free breakfast and lunch, and transportation to, from Western School of Science and Technology, if feasible, and in the best interest of the student.
- Transportation will be provided at the request of the parent/guardian or homeless liaison to and from the school of origin.
- Provide a quality education to homeless children and youths and include such students in all educational activities.

Admission

Western School of Science and Technology shall immediately admit the homeless student even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

Western School of Science and Technology shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, Western School of Science and Technology shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the student to the Liaison for Homeless Students who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records. Homeless children and youths will not be stigmatized based on their status as homeless.

Dispute Resolution Process

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school:

- The student shall be immediately admitted to the school of choice while pending resolution of the dispute.
- The parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision at the state level.
- The parent or guardian of homeless children and youth will be notified in writing of their right to appeal to the state level.
- The student, parent or guardian shall be referred to the liaison for homeless students, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute.
- In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison for homeless student shall ensure that the student is immediately enrolled in the school pending resolution of the dispute.

