

# Office of Special Services

---

*William Windler*  
*Assistant Commissioner*

*September 2002*



## Research You Can Use

*This publication, “**Research You Can Use**”, is the first of a series of communications that will focus on successful strategies to close the achievement gap. The intent of these articles is to provide synopses of information that highlight best practices and strategies for turning around under-performing schools.*

Anita M. Foxworth Ph.D, Editor  
Margie Milenkiewicz, Author

### **A Note from the Editor**

*Welcome back to the new school year! As you are busily working to get classes and programs organized, I wanted to let you know that CDE will be continuing the publication of “**Research You Can Use**.” As you may recall, this publication provides a synopsis of research about current issues that impact the day to day life of those of you in schools. As many students go back to school some of them may be moving into your district and school for the first time. These same students may be gone before the end of the year. They may be moving to neighboring school districts and will need support and assistance so that their educational process is not disrupted. For these reasons, we decided to address the topic of mobility in the September issue.*

This issue of **Research You Can Use** provides information, about students who are highly mobile due to poverty and lack of affordable, permanent housing. Some issues and characteristics may be similar for all students who experience residential and/or school relocation within a school year. However, there are specific issues that are faced by mobile students who live in poverty that are not associated with students who relocate residence and/or school, due to parental career choice, academic advancement or other reasons.

In this edition, we explore not only the concerns surrounding highly mobile students but we also provide information on key strategies that schools and districts can use to provide service to these students. The definition of highly mobile is “2 or more transfers within the last school year.” Below are some little known facts about highly mobile students:

### U.S. Census (1990)

- Annually 20% of families with school-age children relocate resulting in a new school
- Poor families move 50% to 100% more often than non-poor families.

### U.S. General Accounting Office (1994)

- .5 million children attended 3+ schools between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades
- In urban schools, the turnover rate for students ranges between 40% and 80% each year

Highly mobile students exhibit certain characteristics. Research cited in 12 studies indicates that:

- Students are younger
- Live without both biological parents
- Are poor
- Live in households where the head of household has a lower level of educational attainment
- Are ethnic minorities

The quote below frames some of the issues regarding student mobility and academic achievement:

**“For American children that move more than average, mobility is usually the result of involuntary residential instability caused by poverty and family disruption. These children do not experience residential mobility as an aberration or anomaly; it is an ongoing characteristic of their life. If the academic performance of poor students is to be improved, then the relationship between student mobility and academic achievement must be understood. If the academic performance of poor schools in poor neighborhoods is to be improved, then the relationship between student mobility and academic achievement must be understood. “**

**-Patrick Lopez-**

**“Student Mobility and Academic Performance”**

Lopez’s quote lets us know that there is an essential link between mobility and underachievement. But are there other effects on students with high mobility rates?

### **Research Findings and the Effect of Mobility**

- Students suffer psychologically, socially, and academically from mobility. Mobile students are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and more likely to act out or get in trouble.
- Students changing schools that suffered two or more negative life events in the year prior to the transfer had lower grades in writing, lower self-esteem scores, and higher rates of mobility compared to children that experience no negative life events.
- Students who switch schools frequently score lower on standardized tests (study found mobile students scored 20 points lower than non-mobile students.)
- It takes 4-6 months to recover academically after changing schools.
- Mobility during high school greatly diminishes the likelihood of graduation. Students who changed high schools even once were less than half as likely as stable students to graduate, even controlling other factors.
- There are two specific groups whose educational performance does not seem to be adversely affected by mobility....children living in military families, and students classified as academically gifted.
- Mobility hurts worse for low socio-economic students who change schools often but more advantaged students who are frequent movers also face academic consequences. These children tend to be female, non-white, frequently absent, often tardy, have poor study habits, and have been retained at least once.
- Mobility also hurts non-mobile students. Average scores for non-mobile students were significantly lower in high schools with high student mobility rates.
- Schools serving large numbers of students at-risk experience high rates of mobility as students with similar at-risk factors come and go. Schools that have higher achievement levels have less student mobility and the mobility that they do experience involves students from other higher achieving schools.
- Teacher mobility appears to move counter to student mobility. Mobile students tend to move among schools with high student mobility. Teachers tend to move away from schools with high student mobility. Schools with a highly mobile student population face an ongoing loss of teaching experience, loss of staff continuity, and an increased burden in continually having to recruit and train new teachers.

High student mobility stresses schools as well as students. Yet, many schools may assume, as with poverty, there is little that can be done about student mobility or the educational gaps that develop. However, Lash and Kirpatick, (1990) offer the following recommendations for improving district and teacher ability to work with highly mobile populations:

**For teacher training and development programs:**

- Do not accept the standard default that classroom and school populations are stable, instead, acknowledge that many teachers work with transient student populations. Teacher training and development should present strategies and approaches to work with highly mobile students.

**For schools and districts with highly mobile populations:**

- Map the specific mobility patterns of students.
- Be explicit about expectations for learning and behavior and present these expectations repeatedly throughout the year.
- Be familiar with the curricula used by teachers in other schools at the same grade level.
- Use flexible instructional strategies to allow for student grouping in a variety of configurations to meet different and changing instructional needs.
- Prepare students to transfer to other schools by providing them with curricular information that could help the new teachers in assessing the student.
- Use technology, such as electronic record keeping systems to ease the process of transferring student information.

**Additional strategies for both school and districts are outlined below:**

**The Highly Mobile Student: What's a School to Do?**

District Support:

- ✓ Transmit school records in a timely fashion
- ✓ Provide guidance to parents about the effects of school transfers
- ✓ Collaborate with various agencies to provide families resources needed to reduce mobility, when possible
- ✓ Review and amend policy, when needed

### School Support

- ✓ Prepare in advance for incoming transfers
- ✓ Have a counselor meet with parents & student when registering
- ✓ Arrange parent follow-up with a counselor 2-3 weeks later
- ✓ Facilitate transitions upon arrival
- ✓ Establish on-going activities to address new student needs

### Classroom Support

- ✓ Prepare in advance
  - Learning Packets
  - Skills Assessment
  - Personal Information/journal assignment
  - Short list of rules and procedures
- ✓ Facilitate arrival
  - Assign a buddy
  - Introduce the student
  - Take time during first days to talk with the student
- ✓ Establish on-going activities
  - Review records
  - Provide academic support as needed
  - Monitor student closely for a few weeks
  - Structure activities to nurture social skills
- ✓ Prepare for departures
  - Have students write class letters
  - Make a good-bye Book
  - Make a departure file

The information above reminds us of the urgency to ensure that the needs of highly mobile students are addressed. Designing effective programs for these students helps us increase the opportunity for educational attainment equal to that of their peers. The section below calls attention to the need to include homeless students in accountability systems. This notion is reinforced through the enactment of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. That legislation directs us to ensure that literally, no child is left behind. The likely students to be left behind unless there is substantial intervention are students who exhibit the characteristics of poverty and high mobility.

## School Effectiveness and Accountability

To develop effective strategies within a district to decrease mobility rates and mitigate the effects of mobility, education leaders need to have accurate information about the mobility and stability rates of its schools. The stability rate can be calculated by dividing the number of students who have been in a classroom/school by the class/school enrollment at the beginning of the year (Thomas Fowler-Finn) In some situations, a small percentage of the school population shifts frequently in a school year, while the remaining students remain stable.

With the accurate data at hand, it is possible to analyze disaggregated achievement data for “stable” students and mobile students to assess the effectiveness of various strategies, to look at accountability measures and to make decisions about necessary changes in policies, instructional practices and school environment.

When collecting data a few questions to explore include:

How often does the mobile student move?

What seems to be the pattern in the district or in particular schools?

Is the move within the district, or from district to district?

What factors(positive and negative) underlie the mobility?

How is the mobility relate to the school culture, policies and practices?

What is the stability rate of a district, school or classroom?

Is the student homeless?

**Although the challenge of serving highly mobile students appears daunting, it need not be. While there are neither pat answers nor recipes for creating successful school programs, there are strategies that work. The collaborative efforts of caring school staffs make a difference for highly mobile students. Together we can optimize the educational opportunities for those that are too often marginalized. Consider the following:**

### Imagine the Possibilities

**What would happen if:**

...our schools study annual stability and mobility statistics to analyze its connection to school culture, instructional strategies, curriculum usage and, most importantly, relationships with students?

...we operate with the understanding that what works for some students may not work for others and needed adaptations are made for diverse needs among student populations?

our schools invited each and every student to feel welcomed, safe, valued and connected to the community?

**“With increasing pressure on schools to adopt reforms and raise test scores, addressing the issue of mobility may not seem a high priority for education leaders. But taking steps to reduce mobility and to minimize its harmful effects can support other efforts to improve achievement and to create stable schools in which all students can learn and grow.” Russell W. Rumberger, “Student Mobility”:The Informed Educator Series published by Educational Research Service, 2001**

## **For Additional Information on Highly Mobile Students Who are Also Homeless:**

### **One Child, One School, One Year**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X, of No Child Left Behind, protects the educational rights of children and youth who experience homelessness. Since the first enactment in 1987, changes in subsequent reauthorizations have been influenced by cross-discipline research on poverty, mobility and homelessness as well as best practices nationwide and real problems and barriers faced by students and youth who have experienced homelessness. The intent of the law is to reduce barriers to access, enrollment and academic success. To the extent, feasible, the law requires school districts to keep a homeless children or youth in the school of origin except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. For in-depth information on the statute and the education of homeless children and youth refer to the websites listed below and the sources cited in this newsletter.

### **References**

Duffield, B, & Jullienelle, P. (2002).NCLB: McKinney-Vento Act Training at Arapahoe Community College. Littleton, Colorado

Lopez, P. (2002). *Student Mobility and Academic Performance*. Southwest Texas State University. C15390

Popp, P. A., (2001, #4 Information Brief) *Tips for Supporting Mobile Students*. Available: <http://www.wm.edu/education/HOPE/Honeless.html>

Popp, P. A.;Stronge, J. H., & Johnson, T. (2001). “*The Highly Mobile Student: What’s a School to Do?*” Power Point Presentation, October 15, 2001 at the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Conference

Rumberger, R. W., (2001). *Student Mobility*. The Informed Educator Series. Arlington Virginia: Educational Research Service. [www.ers.org](http://www.ers.org)

## Web Resources

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE): [www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)  
 Note: The NCHE educational materials available for educators related to the education of homeless children and youth.  
 National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth:  
[www.naehcy.org](http://www.naehcy.org)  
 Project HOPE: [www.wm.edu/education/HOPE/Homeless.html](http://www.wm.edu/education/HOPE/Homeless.html)  
 National Coalition for the Homeless: [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)  
 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty: [www.nlchp.org](http://www.nlchp.org)  
 ERIC, Migrant Education: <http://aelvis.ael.org/eric/migrant.html>  
 National Network for Youth: [www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)

### **Contact Information for the education of homeless children and youth in Colorado:**

Margie Milenkiewicz  
 State Department of Education  
 (303) 866-6930  
[milenkiewicz\\_m@cde.state.co.us](mailto:milenkiewicz_m@cde.state.co.us)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 13, 2002, Title I Director's Meeting, Double Tree Inn, Denver**  
**October 23-25, 2002, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Student Achievement and School Accountability Conference, Denver**  
**November 7-8, 2002, Title I Parent Involvement Conference, Double Tree Inn, Denver**  
**December 7-11, 2002, National Staff Development Conference, Boston, MA**  
**February 1-3, 2003, National Title I Conference, Anaheim, CA**

### **ELL Regional Professional Development Seminars (Contact: Elsie Grove 303.866.6753)**

City	Region	Location	Seminar Dates	Deadline
Alamosa	Southwest	San Luis Valley BOCES	Oct. 2-Oct. 3, 2002	Sept. 13, 2002
Delta	West Central	Delta/Montrose Voc.	Oct. 9-Oct. 10, 2002	Sept. 20, 2002
Denver	Metropolitan	Doubletree Hotel (Pending)	Oct. 16-Oct. 17, 2002	Sept. 27, 2002
La Junta	Southeast	Santa Fe Trail BOCES (Pending)	Oct. 23-Oct. 24, 2002	Oct. 4, 2002
Glenwood Springs	Northwest	Ramada Suites	Nov. 6-Nov. 7, 2002	Oct. 18, 2002
Akron	Northeast	Washington County Event Center (Pending)	Nov. 13-Nov. 14, 2002	Oct. 25, 2002
Colorado Springs	Pikes Peak	TESLA Center	Nov. 20-Nov. 21, 2002	Nov. 1, 2002
Greeley	North Central	Best Western Regency	Dec. 4-Dec. 5, 2002	Nov. 15, 2002



**Future Issues of Research You Can Use:**

**October 2002 “School Culture”**

**November 2002 “Family Support for Learning”**

**January 2003 “Extended Time Programs”**

**February 2003 “High Quality Professional Development”**

**March 2003 “Data Driven Decision Making”**

**April “Resource Reallocation”**