



EVERY CHILD AND FAMILY IS KNOWN: YEAR 1 REPORT

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NYC
Center for Innovation
through Data Intelligence

The City of New York
Mayor Eric Adams



ABOUT

The Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI) is a research and policy center located in the Office of the Mayor of New York City, reporting directly to the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives. CIDI fosters collaboration with all Health and Human Services agencies to promote citywide policy change toward the goal of improving the effectiveness of New York City government. CIDI embraces the Mayor's goal of delivering cross-agency solutions to big, bold issues that impact the health and well-being of the city's most vulnerable people.

To learn more about CIDI, please visit www.nyc.gov/cidi.

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With much gratitude,
Maryanne Schretzman, DSW
Executive Director
New York City Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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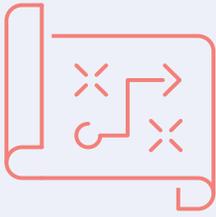


Background

The Every Child and Family is Known (ECFIK) initiative was launched by the New York City Mayor’s Children’s Cabinet in 2023 to support students residing in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters. The initiative is centered around “Caring Adults”—designated school-based staff who build trusting relationships with these students and their families, connect them to supportive services and resources, and promote school engagement. The Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI) conducted a mixed methods evaluation to assess both the initiative’s implementation and its early effects on student outcomes. This report presents findings from the evaluation, combining analyses of student administrative data with insights from surveys and focus groups with Caring Adults.

ECFIK was developed in response to the urgent and growing challenge of student homelessness in New York City. During the 2023–2024 school year, over 131,000 New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) students—approximately one in eight—lived in temporary housing, including nearly 39,000 who resided in DHS shelters. This trend has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by the expiration of eviction moratoria and the increased arrival of asylum-seeking families. Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to miss school, change schools mid-year, struggle academically, and face disciplinary action. These challenges disproportionately impact Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x students, underscoring broader racial and economic inequities in both housing and education systems.

Despite these barriers, many students continue to show remarkable persistence and adaptability in staying engaged with school. Schools play a vital role in supporting their resilience by providing consistency, care, and connection—often serving as a primary point of stability for families navigating housing instability. The ECFIK initiative seeks to strengthen that role by ensuring that every student and family living in a DHS shelter is known, seen, and supported by a trusted adult in their school community.



Methodology

CIDI conducted a mixed methods evaluation of the ECFIK initiative including two complementary methodological components: a quantitative analysis using administrative school and shelter data and an analysis based on data from surveys and focus groups with Caring Adults. While the findings from administrative data analyses are described in full in the Findings section of this report, the survey and focus group data results are also summarized in Findings and discussed in relation to the quantitative data. Appendix B provides a link to the complete survey and focus group data findings, including detailed themes and participant insights. This dual approach allows for triangulation of evidence and provides a more holistic understanding of ECFIK's impact. The Findings section further discusses the assumptions and limitations of each method, including the appropriateness of the model and the reliability of qualitative insights.

Analyses of student administrative data employed a quasi-experimental difference-in-differences (DiD) approach to compare educational outcomes for 286 students enrolled in ECFIK to 2,330 peers not participating in the program. The DiD analysis used administrative data from NYCPS and DHS to measure changes in attendance, mid-year school transfers, academic proficiency in the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) and Math exams, and behavioral outcomes before and after program implementation. CIDI demonstrated that a DiD model is appropriate for the evaluation by showing that pre-treatment trends and baseline characteristics were sufficiently similar between the pilot and control groups to support credible causal inference. To supplement the quantitative analysis, CIDI contracted Barrow Street Consulting LLC to conduct surveys with 96 Caring Adults and focus groups with 12 participants, providing insight into program implementation, relationship-building strategies, staff support needs, and perceived impact on students.

Findings

Preliminary results suggest promising effects from the ECFIK initiative.

The analysis of school administrative data found that students in the treatment group experienced stronger academic performance and fewer mid-year school transfers than those in the control group.

Specifically, elementary school students showed an 8.8 percentage point gain in math proficiency and were 20 percentage points less likely to transfer schools mid-year. Improvements in educational outcomes were observed for middle and high school students as well, although results for older students should be interpreted with caution due to smaller sample sizes and greater estimate variability.

During surveys and focus groups, Caring Adults reported that their relationships with students and families served as a key protective factor, improving engagement and trust.

They also described shifts in school culture toward more empathetic and supportive environments for students experiencing homelessness. However, Caring Adults also identified areas for program improvement, including limited coordination with DHS shelter staff, administrative and communication challenges, and constraints around funding and compensation. The issues noted became a focus for the program team in Year 2 implementation, which concluded in June 2025, and active efforts are underway to strengthen cross-agency coordination and improve operational supports. Addressing these challenges is critical to sustaining and deepening ECFIK’s impact as it continues to expand.



Conclusions

These early findings underscore the importance of school-based, relationship-centered programs like ECFIK in supporting students experiencing homelessness. While not a direct instructional intervention, ECFIK appears to contribute to improved conditions for learning by addressing basic needs and fostering a sense of stability and trust. These results suggest the program may help students feel more comfortable and ready to engage in school, although continued evaluation is necessary as the initiative grows. Sustaining and scaling the program will require ongoing investment in cross-system collaboration, staff development, and equity-focused policy reforms to ensure long-term impact and effectiveness.



BACKGROUND

02

Student Homelessness

Housing insecurity among children is a widespread and growing issue in the United States. Nationally, 1.2 million students, or 2.4 percent of all students enrolled in public schools, experienced homelessness during the 2021-22 school year (National Center for Homeless Education, 2023). Additionally, estimates suggest that before the COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 2.9 million children were affected by an eviction filing annually, with disproportionate impacts on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x families (Graetz et al., 2023). These evictions contributed to housing instability and student mobility, which are linked to a range of negative outcomes, including disrupted education and widening disparities among vulnerable student populations (Collinson et al., 2023; Desmond & Kimbro, 2015; Gruman et al., 2008; Hepburn et al., 2025; Voight, Shinn, & Nation, 2012).

In part due to a unique right to shelter¹ New York City has the highest rate of student homelessness of any city in the United States (Callahan v. Carey, 1979; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). During the 2023–2024 school year, 131,351 New York City students—approximately one in eight—resided in temporary housing, with 38,922 (30 percent) of those students spending time in a New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter (New York City Public Schools, 2023). Citywide, the number and proportion of students in temporary housing steadily increased following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising from 8.8 percent in the 2020–2021 school year to 13.4 percent in the 2023–2024 school year—the highest rate recorded in the past decade (New York City Public Schools, 2023). These trends have been impacted by the expiration of pandemic-era eviction moratoria and the influx of asylum seekers (many of them children) to New York City, which began in 2022 and intensified the rise in homelessness while placing additional strain on the city’s shelter system (Benfer et al., 2021; Office of the Mayor 2023; Office of the New York State Comptroller, 2025). As more children face unstable housing, these conditions have increasingly serious implications for their educational experiences and long-term outcomes.

Students experiencing homelessness are absent more, score lower on standardized tests, switch schools more often, and are more often suspended than their permanently housed peers (Allison et al., 2019; De Gregorio et al., 2022; Hill & Mirakhur, 2019; Shaw-Amoah et al., 2018; Erb-Downward & Blakeslee, 2021). These educational challenges not only limit a student’s immediate academic success but also increase the chances of high school dropout. Without a diploma, young adults are more likely to face difficulties in securing stable housing and achieving



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¹In the context of New York City, the right to shelter is a legal guarantee that compels the City to provide temporary housing to anyone experiencing homelessness.



Racial disparities in homelessness—especially among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x communities—pose a serious challenge to educational equity in NYC.

financial well-being, placing them at a greater risk of continued homelessness into young adulthood (Morton et al., 2018). Additionally, suspensions are associated with greater likelihoods of adverse outcomes in adulthood, such as criminal victimization, criminal involvement, and incarceration (Hemez, Brent, & Mowen, 2020).

Racial disparities are a prominent characteristic of homelessness nationally and in New York City, with significant implications for educational equity. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x communities are disproportionately represented in the city’s homeless population (New York City Department of Homeless Services, 2025), reflecting broader patterns of structural racism, economic inequality, and housing discrimination (Lee, Shinn, & Culhane, 2021). According to recent data, more than 33 percent of families with children in the shelter system identify as Black/African American and over 57 percent identify as Hispanic/Latina/o/x despite these groups comprising smaller proportions of the overall city population (New York City Department of Homeless Services, 2025; New York City Department of City Planning, 2021). These racial disparities are mirrored in public school data: Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x students are far more likely to experience homelessness than their White or Asian peers (New York City Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, 2023). The compounded effects of racial and housing inequities result in unequal access to stable learning environments, support services, and consistent instruction, all of which contribute to persistent gaps in academic performance and graduation rates (Aitken, 2022; Fowle, 2022; Willse, 2010). Addressing homelessness in education therefore requires a racial equity lens that acknowledges and actively works to dismantle the systemic barriers faced by students of color.

Existing Education Policy and Defining “Homeless”

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA, 2015) is a federal law that protects the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It defines homelessness for students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade as the lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, encompassing those who are staying with family or friends, living in shelters, or are unsheltered (e.g., living in parks or cars). The MVA ensures children the right to continue attending their school of origin for the entire academic year, regardless of changes in their housing status during or between school years (MVA, 2015). Additionally, the MVA mandates that each local educational agency designate an individual to serve as a liaison for children experiencing



homelessness in their district. Chancellor's Regulation A-780 builds on and operationalizes these MVA federal protections in the specific context of New York City schools (New York City Public Schools, 2019). NYCPS has implemented several initiatives to support students experiencing homelessness, recognizing the unique challenges they face. It employs regional, shelter, and school-based staff to help families understand their educational rights, enroll in nearby schools, and coordinate transportation services. Each school is also required to designate a Students in Temporary Housing (STH) liaison, usually a guidance counselor or social worker, who ensures compliance with STH policies, helps identify affected students, assesses their needs, and coordinates support. In addition, liaisons assist in the planning and allocation of their school's Title I funds to address the specific needs of students experiencing homelessness. Despite the importance of their role, liaisons often work part-time in this capacity and balance STH responsibilities with other duties, which may limit their effectiveness in fully meeting the needs of this population (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

From both a practical and policy standpoint and consistent with the MVA, schools are essential in supporting children facing homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2015). Schools often serve as crucial settings for identifying students who are experiencing homelessness and connecting those students and their families to essential housing and educational resources. Beyond academics, schools are a source of stability, support, and continuity for homeless children, offering an environment that may be lacking in other areas of their lives (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Ingram et al., 2017; Murphy & Tobin, 2011).

Schools often serve as a crucial setting for identifying students who are experiencing homelessness and connecting them and their families to essential housing and educational resources.

Cross-Agency Partnerships

Effective support for students experiencing homelessness demands intricate collaboration within and between agencies.

Some urban school districts have overcome structural and political barriers by leveraging informal networks and external partnerships to improve service delivery for students experiencing homelessness, providing valuable insights into the role liaisons play and the complexities of service coordination within the MVA (Edwards, 2023). However, service coordination remains challenging. Schools must navigate internal staff collaboration while managing relationships with a complex network of external service providers, including shelters, public assistance agencies, and community-based organizations (Murphy & Tobin, 2011).



The New York City Community Schools Initiative (NYC-CS) offers a relevant example of how collaboration can be structured at scale. By integrating academic, health, and social services within schools, NYC-CS has improved key student outcomes such as attendance and on-time grade progression (Johnston et al., 2020). However, the initiative's success also underscores the ongoing challenges of ensuring consistent service delivery across different schools, particularly in engaging families and aligning resources across agencies (Johnston et al., 2020). Addressing these barriers is essential to providing stable support for students experiencing homelessness and requires continued refinement of coordination strategies across all stakeholders involved.

The Role of School Staff in Supporting Students and Families

A growing body of literature highlights the crucial role of both instructional and non-instructional staff in supporting students and families experiencing homelessness. Within school buildings, staff identify students experiencing homelessness and serve as important sources of information and support for these students and their families, helping to increase student attendance (O'Hagan, Mirakhur, & Farley, 2024). While instructional staff have received much attention, other personnel (e.g., paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, cafeteria workers, front office staff) may represent an untapped resource. Paraprofessionals, who often work closely with students in classrooms and in small group settings, can build strong, sustained relationships that foster trust and emotional support. Similarly, other non-instructional staff often engage in less formal, more spontaneous interactions with students, which can create a sense of safety and openness. Their daily presence in hallways, cafeterias, and entry points uniquely positions them to notice changes in student behavior or attendance patterns and to serve as informal mentors or points of connection for students navigating instability. Recognizing and investing in the potential of both paraprofessionals and other non-instructional staff to support vulnerable youth could be a powerful and underutilized strategy for promoting school engagement and stability.

Paraprofessionals and non-instructional staff are an untapped resource for supporting vulnerable youth and improving school engagement.

Informal mentoring by school staff is linked to positive educational outcomes for students in general, although the overall volume of research on the topic remains limited. School personnel can help expand the social capital of underserved youth by facilitating access to job opportunities and connecting these students to wider social networks beyond their immediate families, neighborhoods, and social circles (Bryan et al., 2011; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Kundu, McLeod, &



Piedrahita-Guzman, 2024). Research suggests that having a school-based mentor is particularly impactful for high school students, boosting educational attainment by 0.62 to 0.93 years (measured by improved GPA, course completion, credits earned, and college attendance) and raising the value of lifetime earnings for high school freshmen by \$60,600 to \$92,400 (Kraft et al., 2023). However, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x students, as well as student from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are notably less likely to have access to such mentors (Erickson, McDonald, & Elser, 2009; Kraft, et al., 2023; Raposa et al., 2018). Teacher mentors show the strongest associations with higher educational outcomes; mentors in other social roles, such as relatives and community members, also contribute significantly, yet friends do not (Erickson, McDonald, & Elser, 2009). These findings lend strong support to the conclusion that informal mentors—particularly school staff—are significant influences on young people’s educational outcomes, with their effects remaining robust even after accounting for other known factors such as social background, parental and peer support, and personal resources.

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In the broader psychology literature, these types of informal nonparental relationships, often referred to as natural mentorships, are shown to support youth development by promoting academic, cognitive, and social-emotional growth through sustained, trust-based connections with caring adults (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006; Miranda-Chan et al., 2016; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014). For students experiencing homelessness, strengthening these mentoring relationships within schools could serve as critical interventions, helping to mitigate the educational barriers caused by housing instability and foster more equitable academic outcomes.

Informal mentors—particularly school staff—are significant influences on young people’s educational outcomes.

In addition to directly supporting students, school staff and school structures play an essential role in engaging and supporting parents and caregivers. Students benefit when schools create meaningful opportunities for families to connect with educators. For example, the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) program, which facilitates structured group and individual meetings between families and teachers, was found to improve parent-school relationships and promote a shared understanding of student academic needs (Sanzone et al., 2018). Such programs help position parents not only as caretakers but as active partners in their children’s education. NYCPS initiatives like APTT underscore the importance of building trust with families in shelter settings and involving them in school-based planning and problem-solving. As caregivers navigate unstable housing and other challenges, strong school-family partnerships can be the stabilizing force that helps sustain student attendance, academic progress, and social-emotional development.

The Every Child and Family is Known Initiative

Program Description

Launched in Summer 2023 by the NYC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives (DMSI) through its Children’s Cabinet, Every Child and Family is Known (ECFIK) is a multiagency initiative designed to support students and families experiencing homelessness.

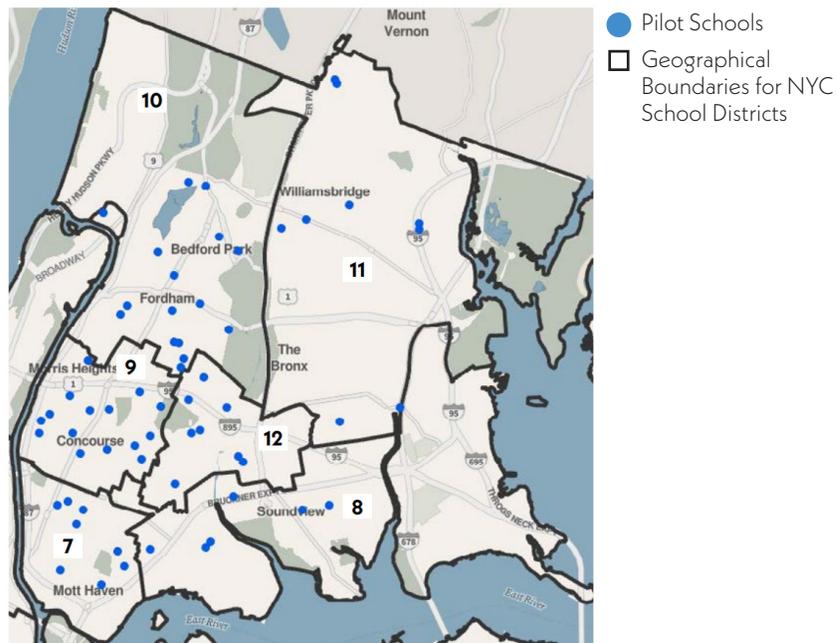
The program partners students living in DHS shelter with designated school staff members known as “Caring Adults.”

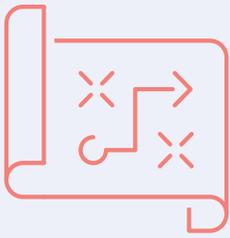
Each Caring Adult is typically assigned and works closely with up to three students and their families to build strong relationships, identify individualized needs, and provide connections to appropriate resources and supports. Support can include a wide range of assistance—such as academic support, material needs, community-based services, and help accessing government benefits—tailored to each family’s unique circumstances.

As a New York City interagency effort, ECFIK involves NYCPS, DHS, the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration (DSS/HRA), and the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). New Visions for Public Schools serves as a partner for the program management digital platform through the New Visions Portal. Together, they comprise a collaborative team working to ensure coordinated support for participating students, their families, and schools.

The Bronx was selected for the ECFIK pilot phase because it had the highest number of students living in DHS shelter in 2023 when the program was being planned (New York City Department of Homeless Services, 2023). ECFIK launched the pilot in the 2023–2024 school year (August 2023–June 2024), partnering with school district superintendents to select and invite 66 Bronx schools demonstrating readiness to implement the initiative (Figure 1). During this phase, the program supported over 700 Bronx students experiencing homelessness. Additional information about the program can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 1. Locations of ECFIK Year 1 Bronx Pilot Schools





METHODOLOGY

03



CIDI employed a mixed methods approach to evaluate the ECFIK initiative. The quantitative component used administrative school and shelter data, along with a quasi-experimental design, to compare the educational outcomes of students participating in ECFIK with similar non-participating students. The survey and focus groups component focused on capturing the experiences and perspectives of participating school staff to assess the program's implementation and perceived impact. This included data collection through surveys and focus groups with Caring Adults.



The evaluation consisted of two main components, which are detailed in the subsequent sections:

1. STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Quantitative analysis of school and shelter data to assess the program's impact on student outcomes

2. SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Surveys, focus groups, and qualitative analysis to understand the experiences of participating school staff



1 STUDENT
ADMINISTRATIVE
DATA

1 STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

RESEARCH QUESTIONS. STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

What was the **impact of ECFIK on student outcomes** in the pilot year of the intervention?

- **School attendance**
- **School stability**, measured by mid-year transfers
- **Academic performance** in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, based on New York State exam results
- **Behavioral outcomes**, identified as reported incidents and suspensions

SAMPLE

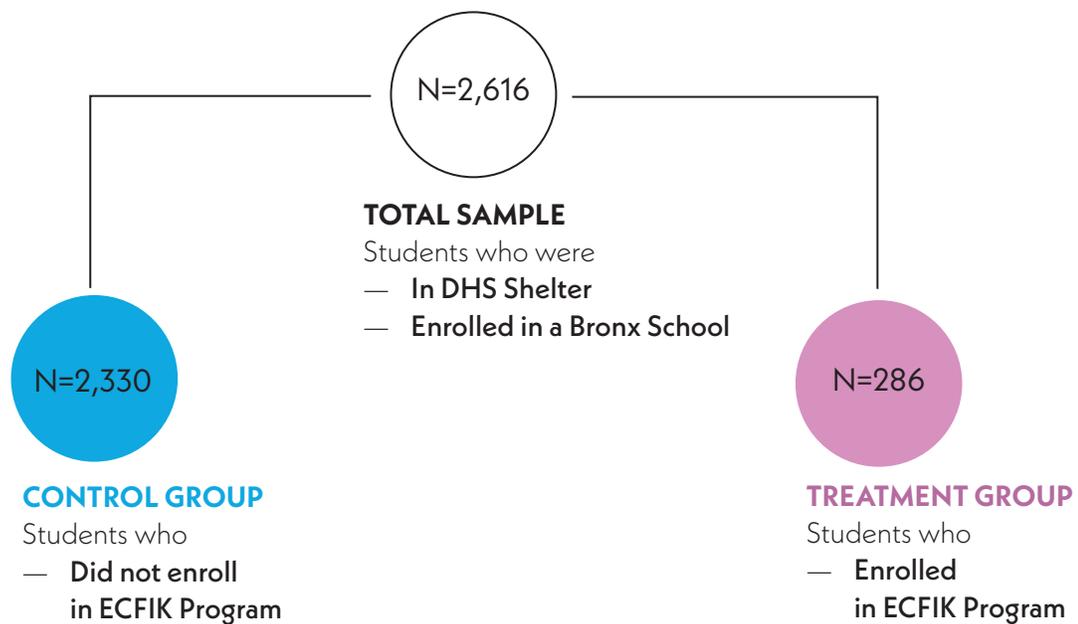
This evaluation integrated administrative data from two sources: NYCPS and DHS.

CIDI began by identifying all school-aged individuals who resided in DHS shelters in August and/or September 2023, which marked the beginning of ECFIK implementation. These individuals were linked to NYCPS student records if they attended a Bronx public school at any point during the 2023–2024 academic year.

From this pool, CIDI restricted the sample to students with NYCPS records in both the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 academic years who met an enrollment threshold of at least 150 school days. There is one observation per student per academic year.

The treatment group was comprised of students who enrolled in ECFIK, identified through records obtained from the New Visions Portal. The control group consisted of students at ECFIK schools who did not enroll in the program as well as students at non-ECFIK schools in the Bronx² (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Sample Composition: Treatment and Control Group Formation



² Some control group students attended ECFIK schools but did not enroll in the program. These students may have been indirectly affected by Caring Adults or school-level changes, potentially diluting the program’s estimated effects. As a result, the findings presented in this report may understate ECFIK’s true impact. Future analyses, including spillover effect exploration, will be conducted in the Year 2 evaluation as more data become available.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Descriptive analysis of key student characteristics - including grade level, race and ethnicity, and length of stay in DHS shelters - was conducted. This helped to contextualize the student population served by ECFIK, as understanding these baseline characteristics was essential to interpreting outcomes.

On average, treatment group students were younger, proportionately more Hispanic/Latina/o/x, less Black/African American, and had longer lengths of stay in DHS shelter (Figure 3).

Grade Level

Treatment group students tended to be in grades 1–5 due to the implementation of the ECFIK program, which primarily served elementary schools (grades K–5) rather than middle or high schools. In addition, one criterion for student inclusion in the CIDI sample was enrollment of at least 150 days in the prior academic year. This criterion contributed to the low percentage of kindergarten students in the sample since, in order to meet this threshold, they needed to be enrolled in NYCPS Pre-K the previous year.

DHS Shelter Length of Stay

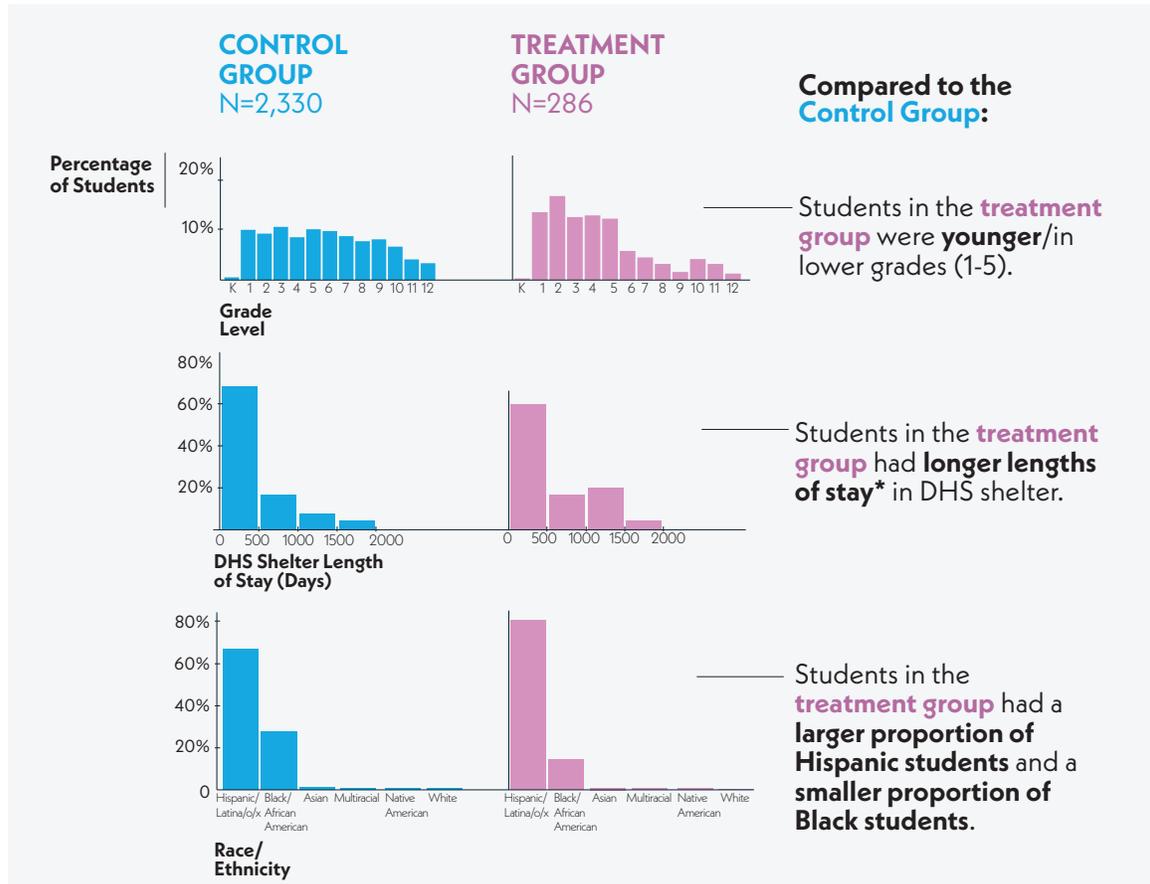
Students in ECFIK had slightly longer average stays in DHS shelter than their nonparticipating peers. A family's length of stay can be shaped by factors such as household size, employment status, and immigration status. For example, larger families may struggle to find affordable units that meet space requirements, and mixed-status families may receive only partial housing subsidies (Benzan et al., 2009). Structural barriers such as these can contribute to prolonged shelter stays. Yet after facing persistent challenges or limited success with shelter-based services, families may be more likely to engage with school-based supports like ECFIK. In contrast, families with shorter stays may experience fewer disruptions and be less inclined to seek additional supports. These differences have implications for comparing the two groups and interpreting program outcomes.

Race/Ethnicity

The racial and ethnic composition of the treatment group also reflected the demographics of the ECFIK pilot schools, which historically serve a higher proportion of Hispanic/Latina/o/x students and a lower proportion of Black/African American students compared to control schools (Figure 4).

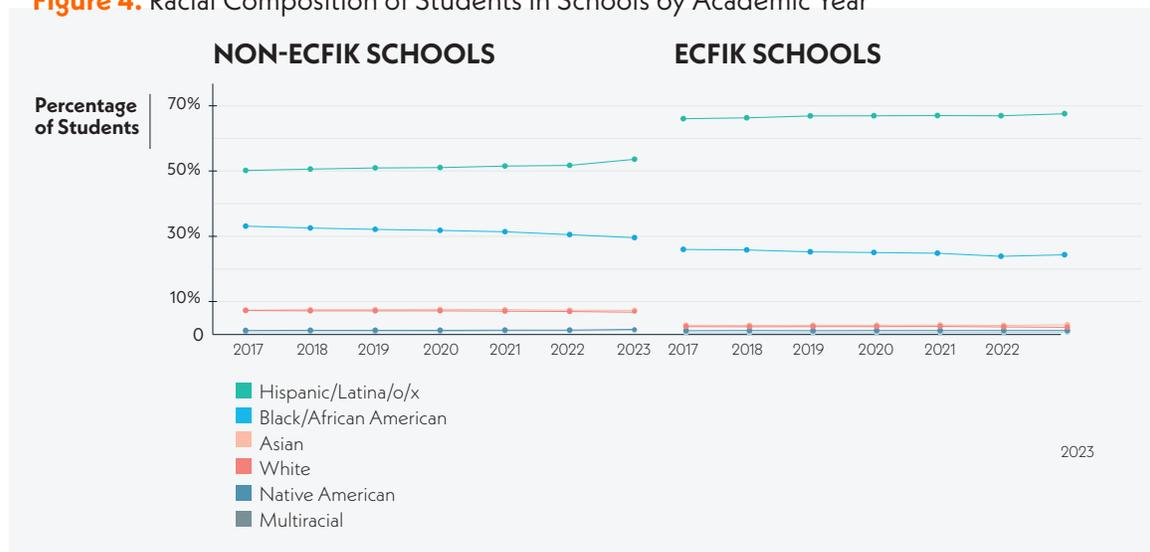


Figure 3. Control and Treatment Group Characteristics



*Length of stay calculations are completed for the 5 school year prior to the pilot (2018-19 to 2022-23 AY)

Figure 4. Racial Composition of Students in Schools by Academic Year



*Years on the x-axis represent the first year of the respective academic year e.g. 2017 is 2017-18 AY

METHODS

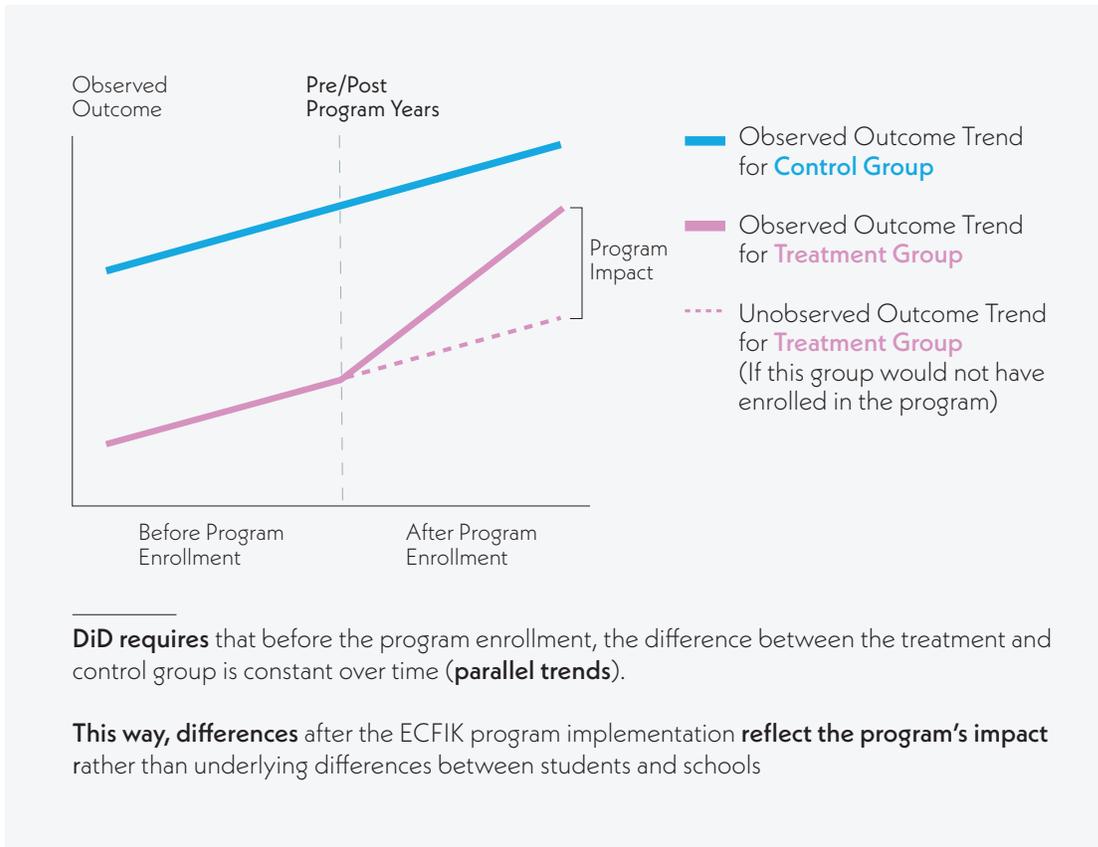
Difference-in-Differences Model

A difference-in-differences (DiD) approach was employed to estimate the impact of ECFIK on student outcomes. DiD compares changes in outcomes between a treatment group and a control group before and after an intervention. This method relies on a parallel trends assumption, which means that in the absence of the program, any baseline differences between the treatment and control groups would remain constant over time (i.e., both groups would follow similar trends) (Ashenfelter & Card, 1984). By comparing how outcomes change across groups, DiD helps isolate the effect of the program from broader trends or external factors. This evaluation reflected an intent-to-treat (ITT) approach: due to a lack of student-level engagement data, highly engaged and less involved students were not distinguishable.

CIDI estimated a DiD model using a standard two-way fixed effects (TWFE) regression, including fixed effects for both students and academic years.

To evaluate the validity of the DiD approach, trends were examined for outcomes at both the individual student level and the school level. Since ECFIK pilot schools were not randomly selected, it was important to assess these trends to ensure comparability between treatment and control groups. The model was estimated separately for students in elementary, middle, and high school in order to assess differences in program effects across school levels.

Figure 5. How to Read a DiD Trend Chart (Example does not contain real data)





2 SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP DATA

To support the evaluation's qualitative component, CIDI partnered with Barrow Street Consulting, an educational consulting firm with extensive experience in NYCPS. The effort aimed to explore key learning questions related to ECFIK's implementation and its perceived impact on students and school communities. The consultant carried out a structured approach, administering surveys and focus groups with Caring Adults to answer these research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS. SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP DATA

The data collection aimed to address the following questions:

- How did school communities implement the ECFIK initiative?
- How did Caring Adults build relationships with students and families?
- What do we learn from Caring Adults about the needs of students in shelter?
- What training and support do Caring Adults need in order to be successful in supporting students?
- How do key stakeholders describe the impact of the ECFIK initiative?

DATA COLLECTION & SAMPLING STRATEGY

A structured data collection approach was used to answer the questions noted, including:



A survey administered to all Caring Adults



Focus groups with Caring Adults

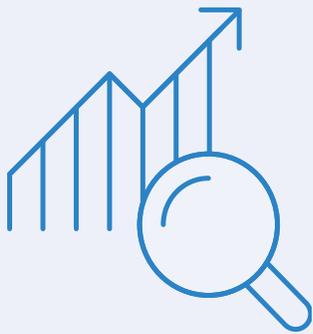
The Caring Adult survey was open to all individuals serving in the role across participating schools. For focus groups with Caring Adults, a purposeful and convenient sampling strategy was utilized. This allowed the research team to select information-rich cases from both highly engaged and less engaged schools. The goal was to understand variations in program implementation and outcomes across different school contexts. With input from the ECFIK program team, 5–10 schools with high levels of program involvement and 5–10 schools with lower levels of involvement were identified and verified through student participation data and staff training records. All Caring Adults at these schools were invited to participate in focus groups. Follow-up outreach was conducted to encourage participation from both groups.

A total of 96 Caring Adults responded to the survey—a response rate of approximately 30 percent—and 12 participated in focus groups. Survey respondents and focus group participants were mostly reflective of the experience in elementary schools. Just over three-quarters (76 percent) of Caring Adults survey respondents and 10 out of 12 focus group participants supported elementary school students. These figures mirrored the overall population of ECFIK schools.

ANALYTIC APPROACHES

Survey data from Caring Adults were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize key response patterns. Analysis included calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

A thematic analysis approach was applied to focus group data. Recordings were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify recurring themes related to the research questions on implementation, training, stakeholder experiences, and perceived impact. This method supports a comprehensive understanding of how the initiative was experienced across schools and roles.



FINDINGS

04

This section presents key findings from the student administrative data and the survey and focus group components of the mixed-methods evaluation, followed by an integrated interpretation of the results.

The analysis begins with administrative data organized by student outcomes, including attendance, school stability, academic performance, and behavioral incidents and suspensions (as defined in the Glossary), and disaggregated by school level.

To support transparency and rigor, the section also includes student- and school-level trend analyses assessing model validity. These analyses examine whether the underlying assumptions of the DiD approach hold, namely that the treatment and control groups followed similar trends prior to the ECFIK launch. This information is essential to making credible claims about program impact.

Key findings from surveys and focus groups with Caring Adults follow.

Appendix B provides detailed findings from the survey and focus group data collection and qualitative analysis. While this section draws from summary insights, the survey and focus group data report provides a deeper exploration of participant experiences and implementation learnings.

Finally, the survey and focus group data insights are used to contextualize and interpret the student administrative data findings where applicable.

They offer additional perspectives on implementation, program effects, and why/how the program may have had an effect.

Together the findings offer an early, multifaceted view of ECFIK implementation and the program's potential impact during its pilot year.



Findings section is structured as follows:

1. STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA FINDINGS

- Mid-Year School Transfers
- Math and ELA Proficiency
- Absenteeism
- Behavioral Incidents and Suspensions
- Additional School-Level Trends (Enrollment and School Demographics)

2. SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- Summary of Key Insights

3. INTERPRETATION OF MIXED METHODS RESULTS

1 STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA FINDINGS

This section presents findings from difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis for all students in the sample, separated by school level: elementary, middle, and high school. These results reflect early signals of the program’s impact on student outcomes during its first year of implementation (academic year 2023–2024).

Overall, the program showed promising early impacts, with improvements in academic proficiency and decreases in mid-year school transfers.

Nevertheless, as this was Year 1 of a new program the results should be cautiously interpreted, especially for middle and high school students where very small treatment group sizes may overstate effect sizes.

CIDI determined that the DiD model was well suited to analyzing administrative student outcome data in the evaluation. Subsequent data demonstrate that not only were pretreatment trends for students in the pilot and control groups comparable but the schools themselves—both those selected for the pilot and those attended by the control group—exhibited similar trends across a variety of outcomes. Since ECFIK pilot schools were not randomly selected, assessing school trends was important to ensure comparable treatment and control groups. This observed comparability suggests the parallel trends assumption is reasonable, which is fundamental to the validity of the DiD approach. Consequently, the DiD model provided a credible framework for isolating effects attributable to ECFIK; in other words, the control group was a reasonable counterfactual for how treatment group outcomes would have evolved in the absence of the program. A vertical line in the following trend graphs mark the onset of implementation in the 2023–2024 academic year, distinguishing the split for pre- and post-program periods. Appendix E presents a table of full DiD model results, including all outcomes of interest.

MID-YEAR SCHOOL TRANSFERS

DiD Model Results

Across all school levels, students in the treatment group were significantly less likely to transfer schools mid-year (approximately 20–37 percentage points less likely), indicating increased school stability. These effects were statistically significant across all groups ($p < .01$) (Table 1).

Table 1. Mid-Year School Transfer: DiD Model Results

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES K–5 Treatment Group. N=212 Control Group. N=1,172				MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 6–8 Treatment Group. N=42 Control Group. N=627				HIGH SCHOOL GRADES 9–12 Treatment Group. N=32 Control Group. N=531				ALL STUDENTS Treatment Group. N=286 Control Group. N=2,330			
	TG	DiD			TG	DiD			TG	DiD			TG	DiD		
	22-23 Mean	Coef	SE	P-value	22-23 Mean	Coef	SE	P-value	22-23 Mean	Coef	SE	P-value	22-23 Mean	Coef	SE	P-value
School Transfers	24.5	-19.8***	4.1	0.000	31.0	-36.9***	8.3	0.000	31.3	-30.8**	10.2	0.003	26.2	-23.9***	3.4	0.000

Notes:

Means, coefficients, and standard errors are reported in percentage points.

TG: Treatment Group

DiD: Difference-in-Differences

Coef: Coefficient

SE: Standard Error

Academic Years: 2022–2023 and 2023–2024

Statistical Significance Levels: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, not significant $p \geq .05$

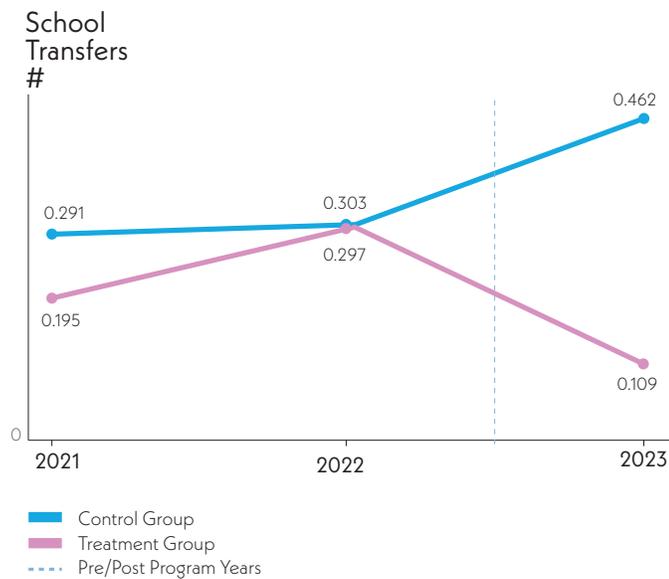
A two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model was applied that includes fixed effects for both students and academic years.

Small sample sizes for middle and high school may lead to unrepresentative estimates.

Student-level Trends

Before 2023, the average numbers of school transfers were comparable between the two groups. After ECFIK began, transfers decreased in the treatment group and increased in the control group (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Mid-Year School Transfers



MATH AND ELA PROFICIENCY

DiD Model Results

Students in the treatment group demonstrated improvements in academic proficiency. Specifically, elementary school students showed an 8.8 percentage point increase in their probability of achieving proficiency in math. Among middle school students, the proportion of students proficient in both ELA and math increased by 25.3 percentage points. Both effects were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Middle school effects for academic proficiency should be interpreted with caution due to small sample size ($N=42$), which may increase the variability of estimates (Table 2).

Table 2. Math and ELA Proficiency: DiD Model Results

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES K-5 Treatment Group. N=212 Control Group. N=1,172				MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 6-8 Treatment Group. N=42 Control Group. N=627				ALL STUDENTS Treatment Group. N=286 Control Group. N=2,330			
	TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD		
		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value
ELA Proficient	12.1	5.0	5.5	0.366	13.6	23.3	12.1	0.055	14.1	9.1	5.3	0.083
Math Proficient	9.5	8.8*	4.4	0.043	27.8	0.7	10.2	0.945	15.9	4.7	4.0	0.242
ELA and Math Proficient	6.9	5.7	3.2	0.077	4.5	25.3*	10.3	0.014	6.0	9.9**	3.7	0.007

Notes:

Means, coefficients, and standard errors are reported in percentage points.

TG: Treatment Group

DiD: Difference-in-Differences

Coef: Coefficient

SE: Standard Error

Academic Years: 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

Statistical Significance Levels: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, not significant $p \geq .05$

A two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model was applied that includes fixed effects for both students and academic years.

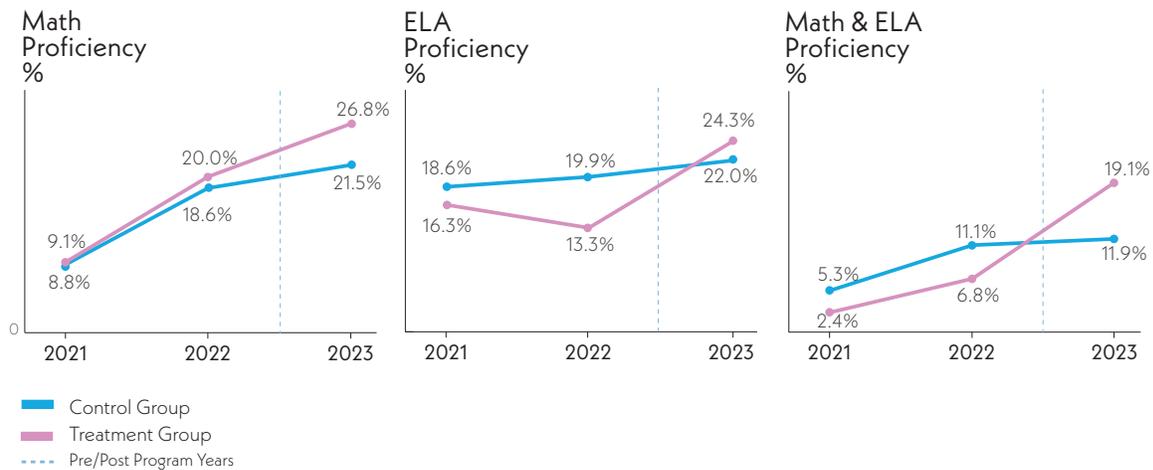
Small sample sizes for middle and high school may lead to unrepresentative estimates.

New York State Math and ELA assessments are only administered in grades 3 through 8 so proficiency results are not available for high school students. Appendix D provides additional figures detailing proficiency by grade level.

Student-level Trends

- Math proficiency trends were similar prior to the program. In 2023, the treatment group showed a larger increase in proficiency.
- Pre-program trends in ELA proficiency differed between groups but the treatment group experienced a greater increase in 2023.
- Proficiency in both math and ELA substantially increased in the treatment group following implementation (Figure 7).

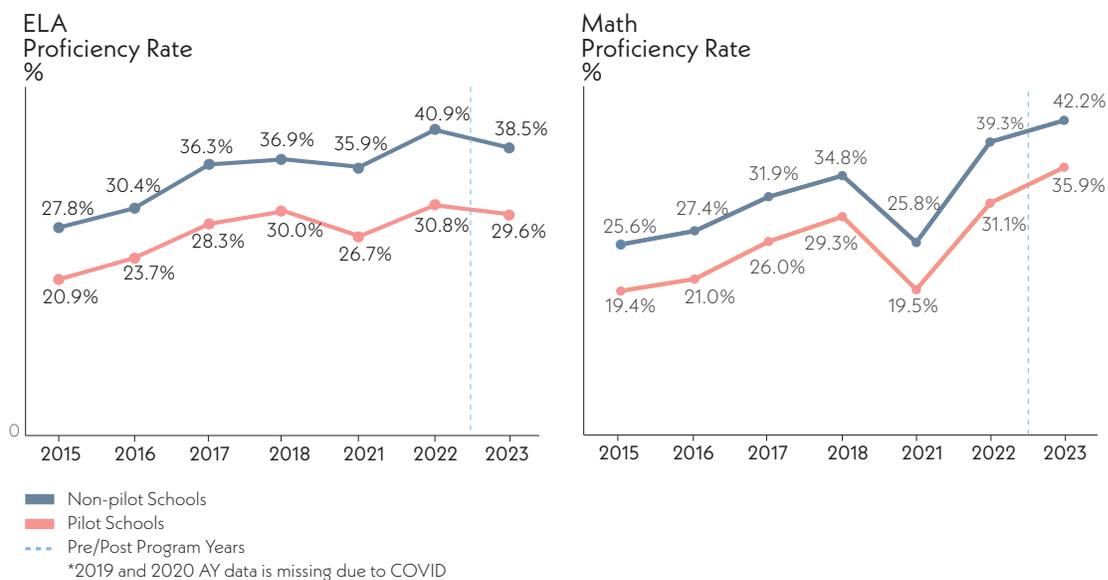
Figure 7. Math and ELA Proficiency



School-level Trends

Math and ELA proficiency trends were consistent across pilot and non-pilot schools before ECFIK implementation. After the program began, pilot schools had a slightly larger increase in math proficiency rates (Figure 8).

Figure 8. School Math and ELA Proficiency



ABSENTEEISM

DiD Model Results

The program’s impact on student attendance varied by grade level, with minimal effects observed among elementary school students. Elementary school students showed an average increase of 0.9 absent days, a difference that was not statistically significant. Larger effects emerged for older students: middle school participants experienced an average reduction of 2.8 days (a 1.8 percentage point decrease in absence rate) while high school students saw the largest impact with a decrease in absence of 11.7 days (7.2 percentage point decrease in absence rate). These findings should be interpreted with caution due to small sample sizes in the middle and high school treatment groups (N=42 and N=32, respectively), which may increase estimate variability (Table 3).

Table 3. Absenteeism: DiD Model Results

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES K–5 Treatment Group. N=212 Control Group. N=1,172				MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 6–8 Treatment Group. N=42 Control Group. N=627				HIGH SCHOOL GRADES 9–12 Treatment Group. N=32 Control Group. N=531				ALL STUDENTS Treatment Group. N=286 Control Group. N=2,330			
	TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD		
		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value
Days Absent	20.4	0.9	1.0	0.368	17.0	-2.8	2.0	0.165	22.1	-11.7***	3.2	0.000	20.1	-2.5**	0.9	0.004
Absence Rate	11.6	0.5	0.6	0.341	9.9	-1.8	1.2	0.126	13.3	-7.2***	1.9	0.000	11.6	-1.6**	0.5	0.002

Notes:

Means, coefficients, and standard errors are reported in number of days for Days Absent and in percentage points for Absence Rate.

TG: Treatment Group

DiD: Difference-in-Differences

Coef: Coefficient

SE: Standard Error

Academic Years: 2022–2023 and 2023–2024

Statistical Significance Levels: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, not significant p ≥ .05

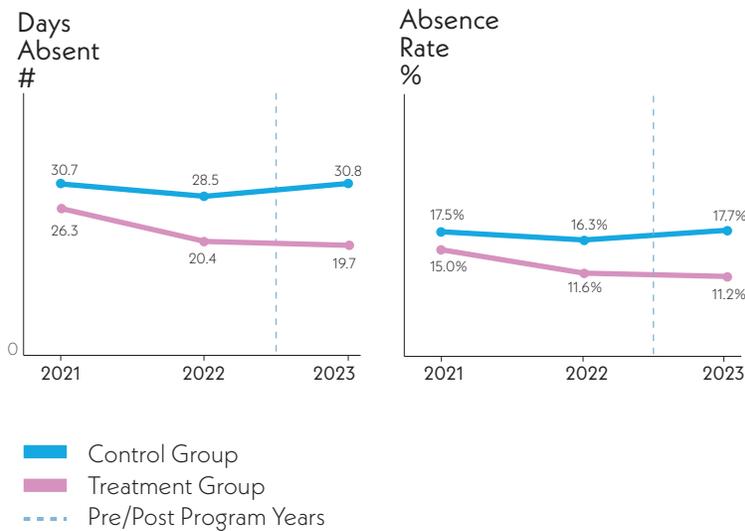
A two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model was applied that includes fixed effects for both students and academic years.

Small sample sizes for middle and high school may lead to unrepresentative estimates.

Student-level Trends

Trends in absenteeism, measured by both Days Absent and Absence Rate, were similar between the treatment and control groups prior to the program. After implementation in 2023, absenteeism decreased in the treatment group and increased in the control group (Figure 9).

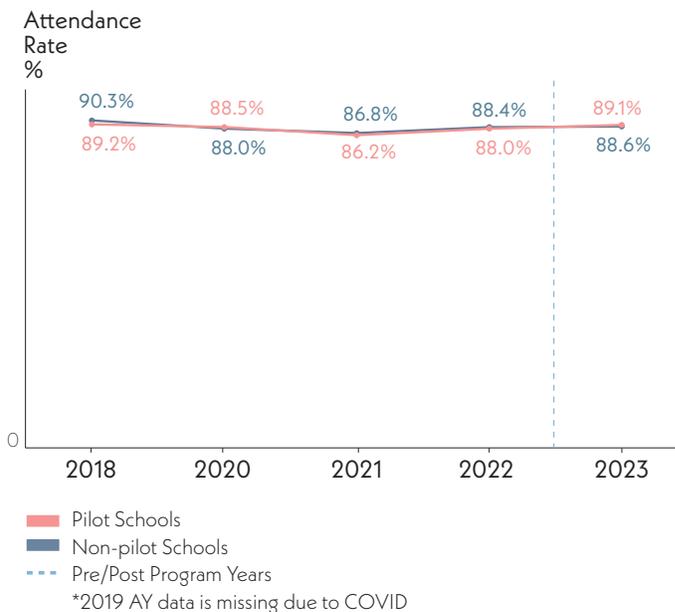
Figure 9. Absenteeism



School-level Trends

Pilot and non-pilot schools had similar attendance trends prior to ECFIK. After the program started, pilot schools had a slightly larger increase in attendance rates (Figure 10).

Figure 10. School Attendance



BEHAVIORAL INCIDENTS AND SUSPENSIONS

DiD Model Results

Behavioral incidents increased among treatment group students across all school levels. However, the increase was not matched by a rise in suspensions (Table 4). Given the very small number of suspension events and the limited sample sizes of middle and high school treatment groups, these estimates are imprecise and should be interpreted with caution.

Table 4. Behavioral Incidents and Suspensions: DiD Model Results

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES K-5				MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 6-8				HIGH SCHOOL GRADES 9-12				ALL STUDENTS			
	Treatment Group. N=212				Treatment Group. N=42				Treatment Group. N=32				Treatment Group. N=286			
	Control Group. N=1,172				Control Group. N=627				Control Group. N=531				Control Group. N=2,330			
	TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD		
		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value
Incident All	10.4	3.3	2.6	0.209	7.1	7.9	6.9	0.248	9.4	9.1	7.9	0.252	9.8	5.2*	2.4	0.027
Incident Level 4-5	1.9	1.5	1.5	0.337	2.4	-0.2	5.0	0.971	6.3	7.2	6.4	0.264	2.4	1.7	1.6	0.274
Suspension	0.5	-0.8	0.5	0.134	0.0	2.8	3.5	0.411	6.3	-2.3	4.7	0.631	1.0	-0.9	0.9	0.354

Notes:

Means, coefficients, and standard errors are reported in percentage points.

TG: Treatment Group

DiD: Difference-in-Differences

Coef: Coefficient

SE: Standard Error

Academic Years: 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

Statistical Significance Levels: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, not significant p ≥ .05

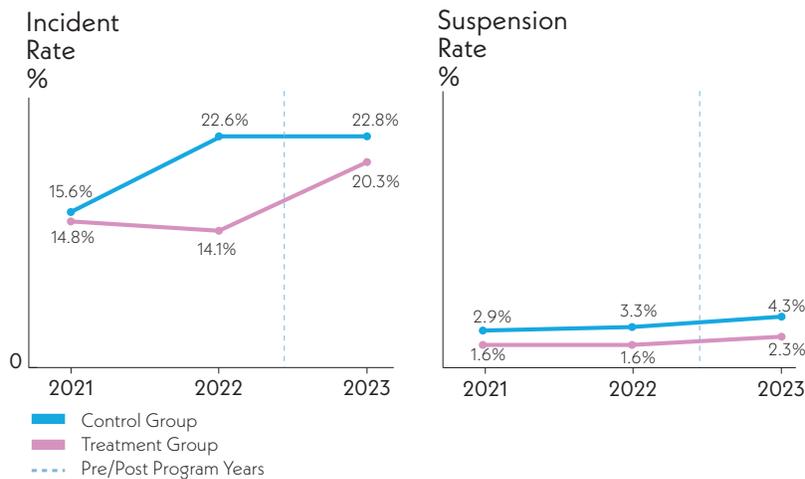
A two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model was applied that includes fixed effects for both students and academic years.

Small sample sizes for middle and high school may lead to unrepresentative estimates.

Student-level Trends

After ECFIK implementation, incidents increased more for the treatment group than the control group, although this did not appear to be accompanied by a rise in suspensions. Suspension trends were similar among groups; however, the sample size for suspensions in the treatment group was very small, limiting reliable conclusions (Figure 11).

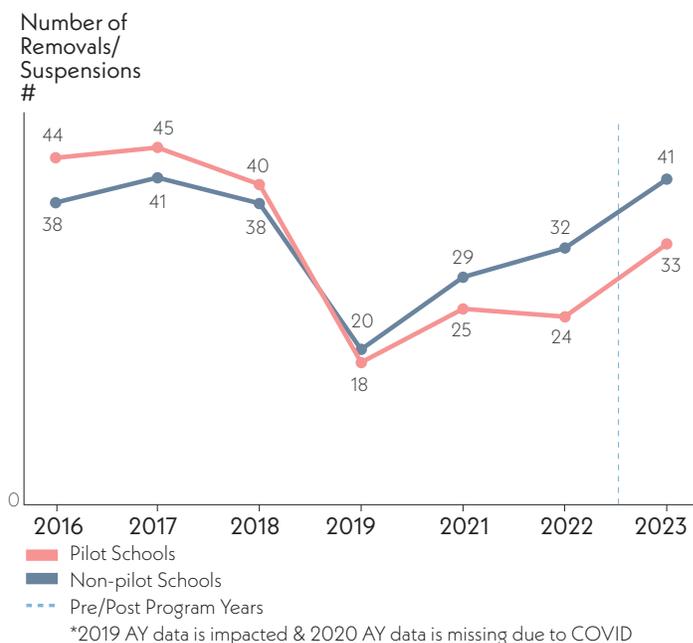
Figure 11. Incidents and Suspensions



School-level Trends

Both pilot and non-pilot schools exhibited comparable trends in the average number of disciplinary removals and suspensions before the start of the ECFIK program (Figure 12).

Figure 12. School Discipline



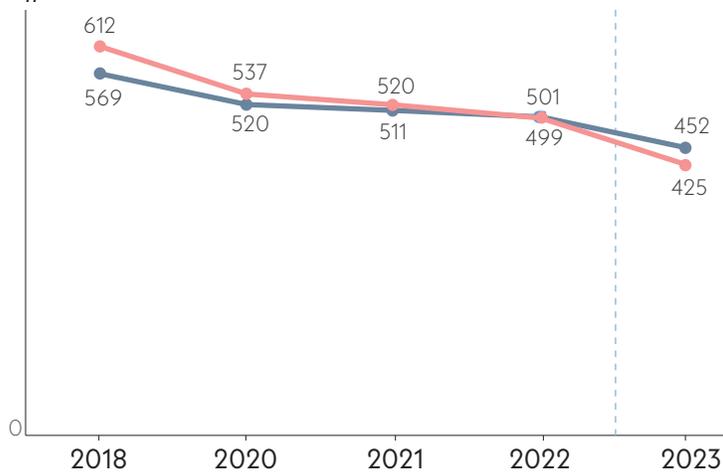
ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-LEVEL TRENDS

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

On average, enrollment patterns were similar across pilot and nonpilot schools before ECFIK implementation (Figure 13).

Figure 13. School Enrollment

Number of
Students Enrolled
#



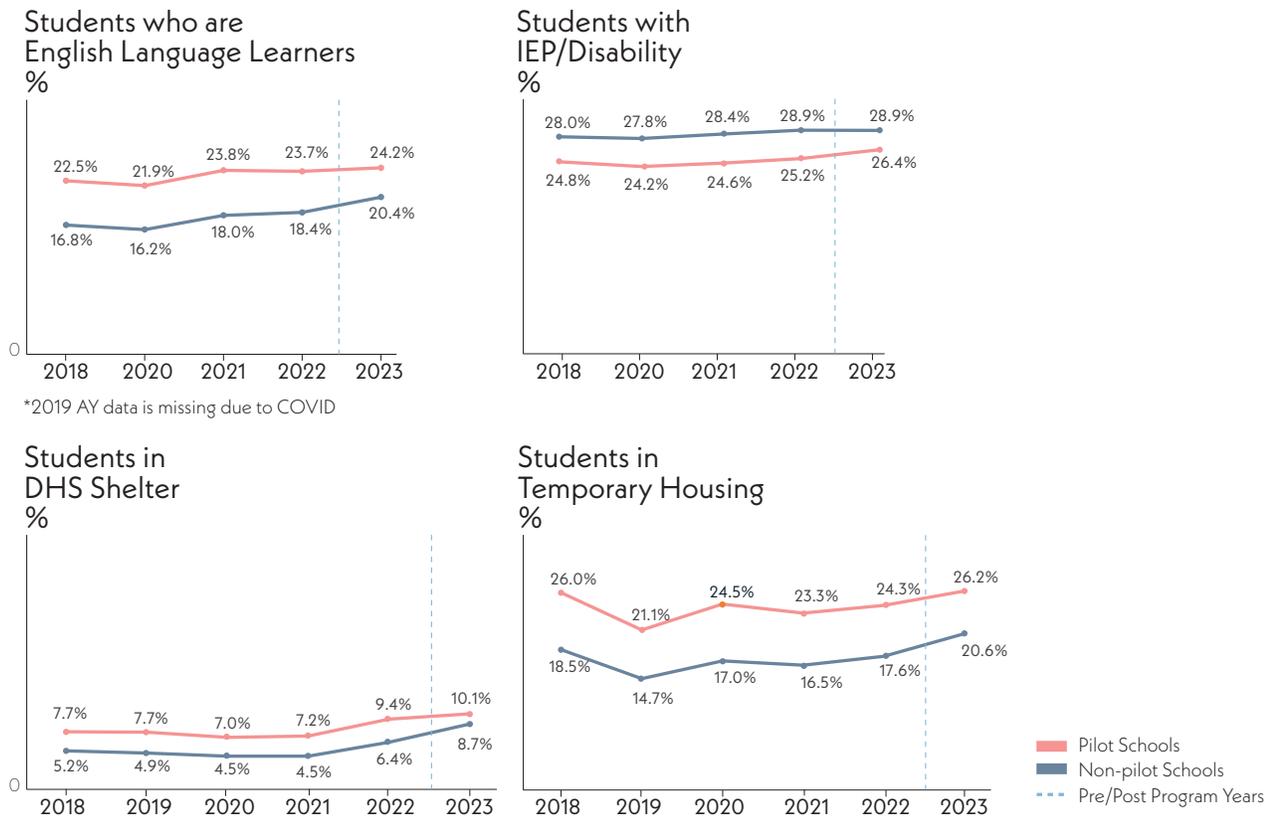
- Pilot Schools
- Non-pilot Schools
- - - Pre/Post Program Years

*2019 AY data is missing due to COVID

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Schools serving the treatment and control groups showed similar demographic trends before the program. In 2023, the percentage of students living in DHS shelters increased less in pilot schools than in control schools. This may suggest that ECFIK schools offer greater stability for families. Further analysis is needed to determine whether students in these schools exit shelter at higher rates (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Student Characteristics



2 SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Key insights derived from the Caring Adults survey and focus group data are summarized in this section.

Surveys were conducted with 96 Caring Adults and focus groups with 12 participants, which provided insight into program implementation, relationship-building strategies, staff support needs, and the program's perceived impact on students.

Appendix B provides a link to detailed findings organized by key learning question.

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS

1

Strong Relationships

Most Caring Adults who participated in the evaluation built strong relationships with students and families and addressed the immediate or academic needs of students and families in shelter.

2

Positive Impact on Families and Students

Almost all Caring Adults described the positive impacts participation in ECFIK had on students and families. In particular, Caring Adults spoke about the benefits of having a trusted, go-to person at school.

3

Positive Impact on School Culture

Families are not the only ones impacted by this work. Caring Adults reported positive impacts on school culture and community due to ECFIK, noting increased empathy and collective responsibility for students and families living in shelter and greater awareness of their needs.

4

Staff Collaboration

Staff of both DHS shelters and NYCPS were dedicated to supporting families in the shelter system. Although ECFIK intended for the two communities to regularly engage to enhance the experience for families in shelter, the communities did not consistently connect during the pilot year.

5

Recommendations for Program Improvement

Caring Adults suggested a number of areas for programmatic improvement. Most notably, they shared challenges in describing the program to families and others within the school building, using federal Title I STH funds³, and ensuring Caring Adults are paid for their work with families.

³Title I, Part A (Title I-A) funds are federal education resources aimed at supporting students from low-income families. School districts are required to reserve a portion of these funds to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness, in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These funds may be used for services such as transportation, school supplies, tutoring, and other supports to ensure educational stability and access.

3 INTERPRETATION OF MIXED METHODS RESULTS

This section synthesizes findings from both the quantitative analysis of student administrative data and the data collected through surveys and focus groups.

The goal is to interpret how the two strands of evidence inform one another, identifying areas where the qualitative data provide context or explanatory depth for observed quantitative trends and where student administrative data help assess the scale or consistency of the experiences described in surveys and focus groups.

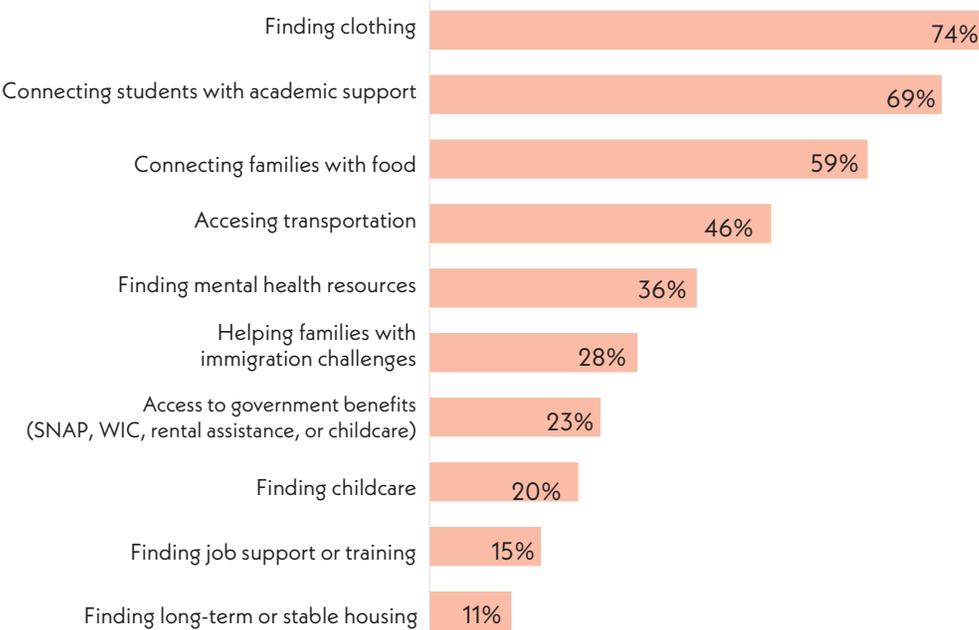
Together, these findings offer a more comprehensive understanding of the ECFIK program's early impact on student outcomes and school communities.

Meeting Immediate and Academic Needs Supports Learning Gains for Students

The types of support Caring Adults provided aligns with the gains observed in student academic proficiency in the analysis of administrative data. Survey data show that Caring Adults most frequently assisted students and families with academic needs (69 percent) and with basic necessities such as clothing (74 percent) and food (59 percent), while also addressing emotional and logistical challenges related to housing, transportation, and mental health (see Figure 15). This holistic approach may help reduce nonacademic barriers to learning, creating more stable conditions for classroom engagement and success. Academic support was the second most frequent form of assistance provided, suggesting a direct connection between Caring Adult efforts and observed gains in math proficiency—particularly in elementary and middle school. Students who are more secure, stable, and supported are better positioned to engage in and benefit from classroom instruction.

Other supports Caring Adults named included helping families with vaccines; calling realtors to find permanent housing; trying to find a therapist for a student; creating a morning program for students so they could arrive at school earlier and parents could get to work; and seeking legal counsel to support special education advocacy.

Figure 15. Survey Responses on Types of Support Provided by Caring Adults



Strong Relationships Contribute to School Stability

Caring Adults also appeared to play a key role in fostering school stability.

Quantitative data showed a significant decrease in mid-year school transfers for students in the treatment group across all school levels. This aligns with qualitative findings that Caring Adults often built strong, trusting relationships with both students and families.

These relationships may have helped families feel more anchored within their school communities, even amid ongoing residential or economic instability that might otherwise prompt a transfer.

Students and families who feel supported and connected are more likely to remain enrolled in the same school, reinforcing continuity in educational experiences.

CARING ADULTS ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES:

“

The **caregiver** is so appreciative and always points out how wonderful we all are for helping. She always **answers the phone in such a cheerful manner** when she realizes it is me. She says she **feels heard and supported.**

”

“

They feel **more confident.** We have a **parent on the school leadership team [SLT]** . . . he's in the shelter and we are mentoring one of his kids. So that's amazing, because I was like, 'Wow.' **Usually they don't want to participate.** They don't feel adequate to participate. So one of 'em is on the SLT.

”

CARING ADULTS ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS:

“

I feel like we're **being that bridge.** So that's why it's so important . . . **we're always there for them** and I think that **alleviated** a lot of the runarounds and **hurdles** that they already come to the school with and helped them get through those **so that they can focus on trying to get better.**

”

“

When you ask them if you need someone to talk to in the school, who would you talk to? And most of them will say their **Caring Adult would be the first one that they would reach out to.**

”

School-Wide Culture Shifts May Influence How Student Behavioral Challenges Are Addressed

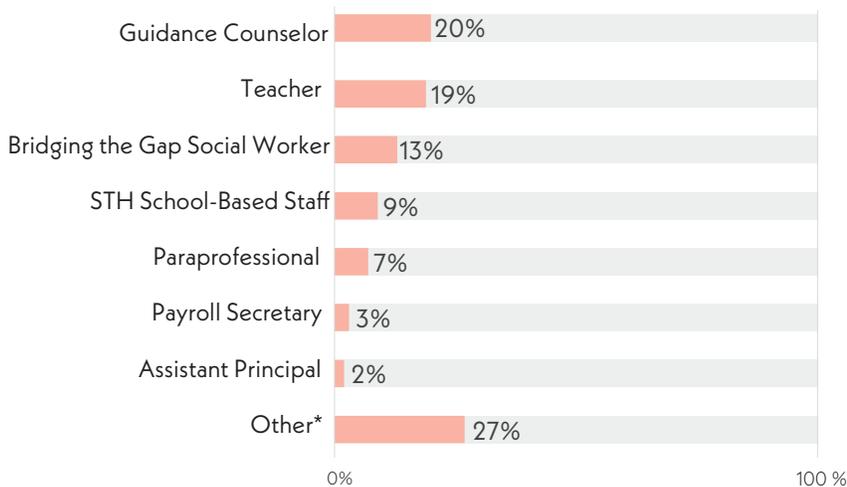
The presence of Caring Adults more broadly contributed to shifts in school culture.

Although 19 percent of Caring Adults were teachers, many others came from diverse school roles (e.g., paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, social workers, parent coordinators), creating a broader network of adults responsible for supporting families in shelter (see Figure 16). Focus group participants described increased empathy, a deeper collective understanding of the challenges these families face, and shared responsibility across the school community.

This cultural shift may also help explain the program’s potential influence on behavioral outcomes.

While reports of incidents among treatment group students generally increased, suspension rates did not rise across the board. It is plausible that schools participating in ECFIK began to more consistently document behavior and respond with less exclusionary disciplinary practices, supported by the relational infrastructure that Caring Adults helped to build. The presence of Caring Adults and the broader relational ethos they helped to cultivate may have encouraged more restorative or supportive responses to behavioral issues.

Figure 16. School Roles of Staff Serving as Caring Adults



*Roles provided under "Other" included Social worker (11%), Family Worker (3%), School Aide (3%), and Parent Coordinator (2%)

CARING ADULTS ON EMPATHY AND SCHOOL CULTURE SHIFTS:

“ My principal never was involved in busing, and this year she was involved in busing because . . . her child [through ECFIK] had a busing issue. So now she’s like, ‘Tell me what to do.’ So, see, those little things, I was glad because they were able to **see another side of what the children are instead of just seeing them as a number and academics.** ”

“ I think I have become aware of the needs that sometimes aren’t being met for these kids. **I feel like anything I can do to help them, I will.** Definitely more empathetic to the students in my community. **Gave me a true insight as to what their life is like.** ”

“ There’s **more of an understanding** because when you **listen to the needs of the students** and the different things that happened, like, ‘Oh no, now they’re in temporary housing, now they’re doubled up.’ **You get to know the terminologies** and what it means and what’s going on. And **there’s definitely a big show of empathy** with . . . most of our **teachers that are participating in [ECFIK].** ”

CARING ADULT ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE:

“ **We had about two . . . heavy hitters.** These are students that we had from a previous school year that they fought a lot. They just got into a lot of conflicts and that was also contributing to why they didn’t come to school—more for safety or just not wanting to be around certain people. But through them having a **Caring Adult**, it was also another **space of support**, another way to do **mediations**, another way to **let them know you are safe here.** And thinking about it now, **I don’t think anyone on our list got into a fight this year.** ”

Implementation Challenges Underscore Opportunities for Program Growth

The survey and focus group data also surfaced several areas for program improvement. First, many Caring Adults noted the lack of consistent communication or coordination between school-based staff and DHS shelter staff—a gap the program team is actively addressing as ECFIK expands. A key tool supporting this effort is the New Visions Portal, which provides DHS shelter contact information to school-based staff, helping to strengthen communication between the shelter and school systems. Second, logistical and administrative challenges were frequently cited, including unclear messaging about the program’s purpose, constraints around the use of Title I STH funds, and difficulties ensuring timely compensation for Caring Adults. Addressing these challenges may further strengthen the program’s impact and sustainability in future years.

Relationships as the Foundation for Engagement, Support, and Early Intervention

Taken together, the mixed methods findings suggest that ECFIK's core strength lies in the relational infrastructure it builds between students, families, and school staff. Caring Adults provide holistic individualized support that appears to complement and potentially drive the early improvements observed in academic proficiency and school stability. As one program leader described it, the trust developed through regular check-ins may create a more effective early warning system—allowing academic needs, unmet basic needs like food and clothing, and behavioral issues to be identified sooner, thus enabling students and families to be more receptive to support. As the program matures, its relational foundation could play a critical role in sustaining positive outcomes, especially as the program scales and becomes more deeply embedded in school practice.

“ It is important that all students feel welcomed, cared for, and that they know that staff is here for them. **I see how much of a positive impact I and other Caring Adults have had with the students in our school building, for these reasons I will totally do it again.** ”



CONCLUSIONS

05

Early findings suggest that the ECFIK initiative holds promise for improving educational experiences and outcomes for students living in DHS shelter.

This mixed methods analysis highlights the value of combining student administrative data and qualitative data to better understand both the measurable outcomes and lived experiences associated with ECFIK. While student administrative data demonstrate promising improvements, especially in academic proficiency and school stability, focus groups and surveys provide critical insight into how these outcomes are experienced and what may drive them. Improvements in outcomes are especially significant given the substantial systemic barriers faced by students experiencing housing instability, such as chronic absenteeism, frequent school changes, and lower academic achievement. The findings concurrently speak to the resilience and determination of these students, who continue to engage in their education despite such challenges.

The ECFIK initiative appears to support—not supplant—that resilience by creating relational structures that help students and families navigate instability and stay connected to school.

KEY FINDINGS

1



IMPROVED ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AND SCHOOL STABILITY

Students in the ECFIK treatment group showed stronger academic performance and were significantly less likely to transfer schools mid-year by 20 to 37 percentage points ($p < .01$).

Elementary school students experienced an 8.8 percentage point increase in math proficiency ($p < .05$).

These results are especially notable given the serious barriers faced by students experiencing housing instability, such as frequent school moves and interrupted learning.

2



POSITIVE PATTERNS IN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

While attendance improvements were not statistically significant, emerging patterns suggest that ECFIK may support better attendance—particularly for older students in middle and high school. One explanation could be that as students grow older and have more control over their school participation, regular check-ins with a Caring Adult help promote consistent attendance.

In contrast, attendance in early grades is more parent-dependent, and positive impacts may take longer to emerge due to the time needed to build relationships with caregivers. Further analyses with larger sample sizes could adequately quantify these impacts.

3



RELATIONAL SUPPORTS DRIVING IMPACT

Findings suggest that ECFIK’s most impactful feature is its relational infrastructure—the consistent, individualized support Caring Adults provide. These trusted relationships not only help identify academic and behavioral concerns early on but connect students and families to timely resources.

The approach may be especially effective for middle and high school students as they likely have greater agency over their own attendance and engagement. As these students gain independence, personal relationships and accountability more directly influence their motivation and decision-making. Regular check-ins with a Caring Adult may resonate more with adolescents, who can more readily form these connections and respond to individualized attention.

4



POTENTIAL SHIFTS IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Although not statistically significant, there are indications of a shift from exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspensions) to increased documentation and intervention-based responses.

The rise in recorded behavioral incidents without a corresponding increase in suspensions may reflect changes in how schools respond to student needs, potentially influenced by ECFIK’s emphasis on support rather than punishment.

These trends should be cautiously interpreted due to limited sample sizes and require further analysis with larger sample sizes.

IMPLICATIONS

Strong relationships between school-based staff serving as Caring Adults and students and families was a key driving factor in the ECFIK initiative's success. Many described their relationships with students and families as a protective factor, helping to build trust, strengthen engagement, and promote student stability. These findings underscore the value of trusted adult relationships in mitigating the effects of homelessness and highlight the potential for school-based interventions to offer critical support beyond the classroom. Importantly, the initiative did not replace but complemented and reinforced existing supports. Caring Adults served as vital links between students, families, schools, and community services. As schools continue to respond to the needs of students in temporary housing, initiatives like ECFIK offer a framework for integrated, relational, and equity-centered support.

The evaluation also identified areas where the program could be strengthened to enhance its impact. Key challenges included inconsistent communication with shelter staff, administrative barriers around program funding and compensation, and unclear expectations for Caring Adults, many of whom serve in the role alongside other full-time responsibilities. Notably, in Year 2 of ECFIK implementation the program team has already begun to address several of these issues: improving messaging, adjusting funding strategies, and supporting more structured engagement with DHS shelter staff.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The evaluation was limited by the scope of administrative data and by the pilot's initial scale. In particular, the evaluation's short time frame constrained the ability to detect longer-term impacts, especially in student outcomes that evolve over multiple years. Because the pilot year was primarily implemented in elementary schools, the sample included relatively few middle and high school students. As a result, the ability to draw conclusions about the program's impact on older students was limited and remains an important area for future inquiry. Also, the pilot year was implemented only in the Bronx, which further limits the generalizability of the findings to other boroughs or districts with different demographic or contextual factors.

In addition, while surveys and focus groups offered valuable qualitative insights, they reflected only the perspectives of those Caring Adults who chose to participate. Due to the limited participation of students and families as well as time constraints related to obtaining the necessary permissions, the research team was unable to gather a sufficiently representative sample to include their perspectives in the analysis in a valid or meaningful way. This is a key limitation as understanding the experiences of those ECFIK directly served was critical to a complete evaluation of its effectiveness and relevance. Future research efforts should prioritize the inclusion of students and caregivers to strengthen the validity and depth of qualitative findings.

As ECFIK implementation expands, future research will be essential to assessing its sustained effects. Continued evaluation will be essential to understanding long-term impacts and informing future policy and program design. With adequate investment and coordinated cross-sector collaboration, ECFIK may represent a scalable model for addressing student homelessness in New York City and beyond.

APPENDIX

06

APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME	DEFINITION
Days absent	Number of days missed from school during the respective school year.
Absence rate	Proportion of total school days students are absent from school.
School transfers	Number of school transfers during the school year. Excludes expected and promotional school changes at the beginning or end of the school year (e.g., moving up from middle school to high school).
Behavioral incident	<p>Percent of students who had an “incident”—a situation or event that violates the school’s code of discipline and potentially leads to disciplinary action. Incident reports span five different levels, as determined by the severity of the action(s). However, some schools may have additional tiers of intervention or restorative approaches to address behaviors at different levels.</p> <p>Level 1: Uncooperative/Noncompliant Behavior Level 2: Disorderly Behavior Level 3: Disruptive Behavior Level 4: Aggressive or Injurious/Harmful Behavior Level 5: Seriously Dangerous or Violent Behavior</p>
Suspension	Percent of students who had a “suspension”—a punishment that removes the student from their school for violating school rules, with the length of suspension determined by the severity of the incident. There are two main types of suspension: principal suspensions (for up to five days) and superintendent suspensions (for six or more days). Superintendent suspensions require a hearing.
English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency	Percent of students who scored Level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA exam.
Math proficiency	Percent of students who scored Level 3 or 4 on the New York State Math exam.
Proficiency	Percent of students who were proficient in both ELA and Math or scored a Level 3 or 4 on both New York State ELA and Math exams.

APPENDIX B. SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP DATA REPORT PRODUCED BY BARROW STREET CONSULTING

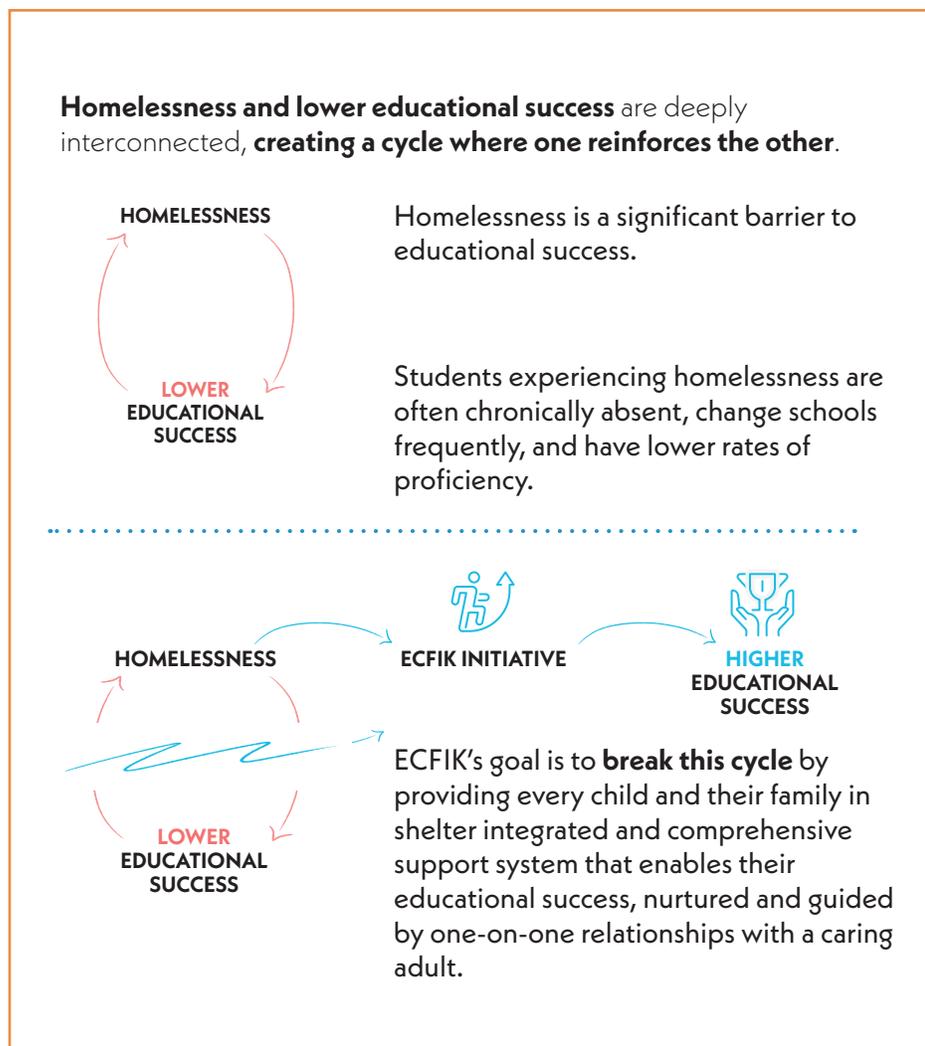
Link to report: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cidi/reports/reports.page>

APPENDIX C. ADDITIONAL ECFIK PROGRAM INFORMATION

WHY WAS ECFIK LAUNCHED?

Students experiencing homelessness face structural barriers that significantly disrupt their education, including chronic absenteeism, frequent school changes, and lower academic achievement. The figures below show the cyclic relationship between homelessness and lower educational outcomes. Each component can worsen the others over time. ECFIK launched with the goal of helping to break this cycle by providing students in shelter with consistent, individualized support through trusted adult relationships. The goal is to promote long-term educational stability and success.

Figure C.1. Why was ECFIK Launched?



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: SUCCESS PLANNING

The ECFIK initiative is grounded in the Success Planning Framework developed by Harvard University’s EdRedesign Lab (2025). Success Planning is a relationship-based strategy that connects each student to a caring adult—known as a navigator—who partners with the student and their family to co-create a personalized plan that identifies needs, strengths, and goals, and connects them to coordinated supports. The framework emphasizes holistic cross-sector collaboration and integrated systems of support to ensure that every child is known, seen, and heard.

While many communities across the United States have adopted Success Planning through individual schools or school/community partnerships, New York City is the first to implement the framework at scale through a citywide, multi-agency model (Figure C2). ECFIK’s unique structure includes coordination among NYCPS, DHS, DSS/HRA, ACS, and New Visions. Notably, ECFIK also maintains one of the country’s most intensive navigator-to-student ratios, with each Caring Adult supporting no more than three students.

Figure C.2. Success Planning Community of Practice



Source: Harvard University EdRedesign Lab (2025)

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT DIGITAL PLATFORM: PORTAL BY NEW VISIONS

Prior to the ECFIK program, New Visions for Public Schools’ Portal already integrated student data from NYCPS with shelter data from DHS, giving staff a more comprehensive view of students’ housing and educational contexts. To support ECFIK implementation, New Visions enhanced the Portal by adding features that allowed Caring Adults to log check-ins with students and families, manage caseloads, and access key information in a centralized platform. The Portal also facilitated the collection and tracking of participant consent forms.

APPENDIX D. GRADE-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF MATH AND ELA PROFICIENCY

Figure D.1. Overall Sample Proficiency by Grade (22-23 & 23-24 AYs)

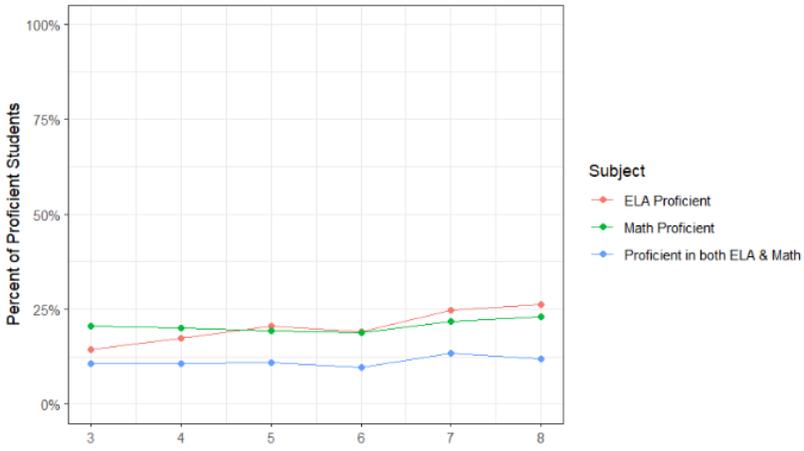


Figure D.2. Proficiency by Grade & Year

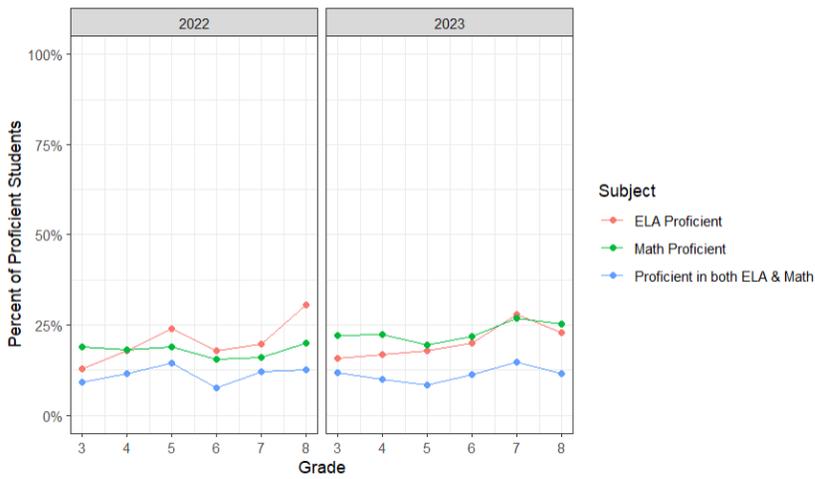
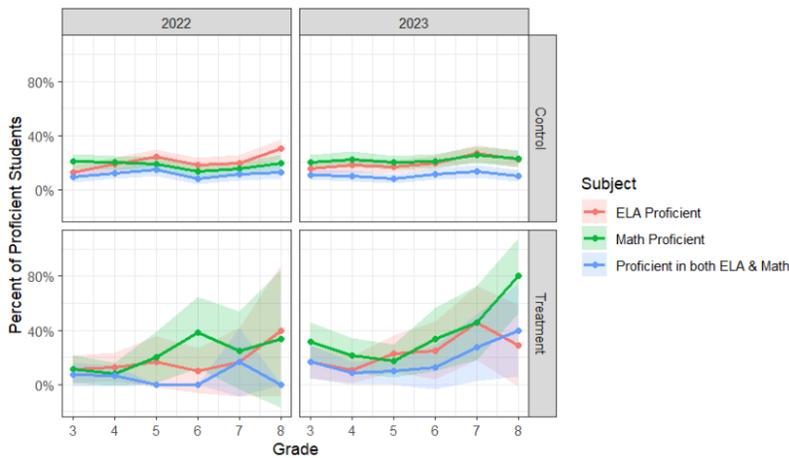


Figure D.3. Proficiency by Grade, Year & Treatment Group with Shaded 95% CIs



APPENDIX E.

FULL DIFFERENCE-IN-DIFFERENCES MODEL RESULTS

Table E.1. Detailed DiD Model Results

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES K-5				MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 6-8				HIGH SCHOOL GRADES 9-12				ALL STUDENTS			
	TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD			TG 22-23 Mean	DiD		
		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value		Coef	SE	P-value
Days Absent	20.396	0.883	0.979	0.368	17.048	-2.816	2.026	0.165	22.094	-11.693***	3.225	0.000	20.094	-2.548**	0.880	0.004
Absence Rate	0.116	0.005	0.006	0.341	0.099	-0.018	0.012	0.126	0.133	-0.072***	0.019	0.000	0.116	-0.016**	0.005	0.002
School Transfer	0.245	-0.198***	0.041	0.000	0.310	-0.369***	0.083	0.000	0.313	-0.308**	0.102	0.003	0.262	-0.239***	0.034	0.000
Incident All	0.104	0.033	0.026	0.209	0.071	0.079	0.069	0.248	0.094	0.091	0.079	0.252	0.098	0.052*	0.024	0.027
Incident Level 4-5	0.019	0.015	0.015	0.337	0.024	-0.002	0.050	0.971	0.063	0.072	0.064	0.264	0.024	0.017	0.016	0.274
Suspension	0.005	-0.008	0.005	0.134	0.000	0.028	0.035	0.411	0.063	-0.023	0.047	0.631	0.010	-0.009	0.009	0.354
ELA Proficient	0.121	0.050	0.055	0.366	0.136	0.233	0.121	0.055	-	-	-	-	0.141	0.091	0.053	0.083
Math Proficient	0.095	0.088*	0.044	0.043	0.278	0.007	0.102	0.945	-	-	-	-	0.159	0.047	0.040	0.242
Proficient	0.069	0.057	0.032	0.077	0.045	0.253*	0.103	0.014	-	-	-	-	0.060	0.099**	0.037	0.007
N Control		1,172				627				531				2,330		
N Treatment		212				42				32				286		
School Years		22-23, 23-24				22-23, 23-24				22-23, 23-24				22-23, 23-24		

Notes:

All means, coefficients, and standard errors are reported as rates except for the "Days Absent" variable which is reported in number of days.

TG: Treatment Group

Coef: Coefficient

SE: Standard Error

Academic Years: 2022-2023 & 2023-24

Significance Levels: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, not significant p ≥ .05

We applied a two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model that includes fixed effects for both students and academic year.

Small sample sizes for middle and high school may lead to unrepresentative estimates.

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