RESEARCH

Report on an Educational Program

Department of Research and Accountability

PROJECT SU CASA
2000–2001

Houston Independent School District

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Executive Summary

Project Su Casa 2000–01
Houston Independent School District

Program Description

According to the Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (OEHCY), there were more than 125,000 school-age children in Texas who experienced homelessness during the course of a year (OEHCY, 2001). Numbers reflected a considerable increase since the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program was authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987. Related research on the educational impact of homelessness on achievement shows that high mobility lowered student achievement, particularly when the students were from low-income, less-educated families (Sewell, 1982; Straits, 1987). Additionally, students who attended the same school for their whole career were more likely to graduate; whereas, the most mobile of the school populations, including migrant students, had the highest rates of school failure and dropout (Lunon, 1986).

In response to the growing number of homeless students and problems inherent in being homeless, school districts created programs to help this special population succeed academically, access social services, and secure a safe environment. The Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 further established homeless personnel for school districts; encouraged high-quality approaches to meet the needs of homeless students; required school districts to minimize disruptive school transfers; and strengthened parental rights by disseminating information about those rights.

For the past six years, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) has made aggressive efforts to comply with policies that were established by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and the Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 through Project Su Casa. Homeless students were identified, served, and integrated into the mainstream school environment. Project Su Casa staff removed enrollment and attendance barriers by serving as liaisons for this targeted population. Specifically, disruptions that are sometimes experienced with school transfers were minimized by allowing students to enroll with or without all of their school records. Parents were empowered with information about their rights regarding enrollment procedures, school bus transportation, and food services. Teachers, school administrators, and shelter providers were equipped with information on the issues that homeless students and their families face as a result of their mobility.

To further enhance the educational needs of homeless students, Project Su Casa provided enrichment activities that included regular and tutorial instruction as well as after-school programs. To improve the adjustment of students to the educational environment, school uniforms, supplies, and instructional materials were distributed to schools and shelters throughout the school year upon request from parents, teachers, and shelter staff. The HISD Transportation Department continued to ensure that students' transportation needs were met through scheduling and rerouting of bus services. To enhance awareness and sensitivity, inservices were conducted by Project Su Casa staff to help teachers, school administrators, counselors, shelter personnel, social workers, nurses, registrars, data clerks, secretaries, technology personnel, Special Education/Child Study personnel, and psychologists learn more about the issues and the laws governing services to the homeless. Brochures were issued to parents and placed in public areas of service delivery sites for future reference. Parents and students were engaged in a variety of case management activities and social services to facilitate smooth transition into the district. Project director, social workers attended local and national conferences to learn how other programs have addressed the issue. Finally, through the Harris County Coalition for the Homeless, district personnel, shelter personnel, and

representatives from local social service agencies collaborated monthly to stay abreast of their role in meeting the needs of the homeless. Moreover, these agencies served as referral sources, ensuring that homeless students received the maximum benefit from the project.

During the 1999–2000 school year, Project Su Casa provided assistance to more than 800 students who were literally homeless as well as their families. By the 2000–01 school year, a total of 680 students along with their families were served. Among the many shelters in the greater Houston area, Project Su Casa provided services to residents of the Star of Hope, Salvation Army, Transitional Living Center, DePelchin, Mercy and Grace, Casa Juan Diego, Glenshire Village, Hold My Hand, Houston Area Women's Center, Jaime House, Trinity Life Center, and So La Ti Village. Among the many schools impacted were: Gregory-Lincoln, Rusk, Bell, Easter, Fairchild, Jones, Roberts, Shearn, Thompson, Bastian, Bellfort Alternative, Douglas, Dodson, Fairchild, and Elrod elementary schools. On the middle school level, Cullen, Deady, Fondren, Lanier, Gregory-Lincoln, Pershing, Ryan, and Welch were involved. On the high school level, Lamar, Milby, Westbury, Wheatley, Worthing, and Yates benefited from the project.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine if Project Su Casa was effective in meeting its goals and objectives during the 2000–01 academic year. Additional goals that were not addressed in previous years, which related to student achievement and best practices, were adopted. The goals and objectives addressed were as follows:

- Goal One: Describe end-of-year demographic characteristics of Project Su Casa participants.
  Obj. One: A tracking and reporting system for demographic information gathering will be developed.
  Obj. Two: Program demographics (age, grade, ethnicity, gender) will be tracked and summarized for all Project Su Casa participants by residential status and by school.
- Goal Two: Document the implementation of program objectives, including objectives of focus area programs.
  Obj. One: A tracking and reporting system for objective implementation will be developed.
  Obj. Two: Implementation of program objectives will be monitored and documented.
- Goal Three: Document best practices.
  Obj. One: Barriers and solutions to program implementation will be addressed.
- Goal Four: Collect baseline data on student achievement.
  Obj. One: Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) will be used as a criterion-referenced test of academic achievement to document student performance.
  Obj. Two: Stanford 9 test results will be used as a norm-referenced test of academic achievement to document student performance.
- Goal Five: Parental and Project Su Casa personnel opinions and concerns will be solicited and described.
  Obj. One: Teacher opinions and concerns will be identified through interviews and surveys.
  Obj. Two: Parental opinions regarding the quality of educational services will be gathered through confidential one-on-one interviews by evaluation staff.
  Obj. Three: Shelter personnel opinions and concerns will be identified through interviews and surveys.
  Obj. Four: Youth opinions and concerns will be identified by interviews and surveys.
  Obj. Five: McKinney Education Program Survey will be administered.

Findings

- Project Su Casa provided educational and social support services to 670 students and their families during the 2000–01 school year. The majority of the students were African American females at the elementary level. The number of homeless students served may be low because of difficulty obtaining information needed to complete the McKinney data collection form.

- Project Su Casa staff documented direct services and referrals to collaborating agencies. Student identification information from HISD staff was incorporated into the McKinney Student Database system. Progress notes, sign-in sheets, and reports of subcontractors confirmed the types of activities provided and the numbers of clients involved in the activities; however, names and demographic characteristics of these students were not submitted.

- Project Su Casa staff experienced difficulties identifying homeless students because of their high mobility rate. Specifically, at one shelter, the residents only were allowed to reside for three months.

- Best practices reflected that Project Su Casa has helped students and their families overcome barriers in areas such as school placement, enrollment, transportation, school uniforms, and supplies.

- Baseline academic achievement data show that the 2000–01 percent passing results on TAAS of Project Su Casa students was below that of the district on science and social studies subtests. Project Su Casa student performance surpassed the district on the reading subtest at the 10th grade level (100% versus 86%) and on the writing subtest at the 4th grade level (94% versus 89%). Additionally, there were comparable percentage passing results for both groups on the reading subtest at the 6th grade level and on the mathematics subtest at the 5th grade level (77% and 95%, respectively).

- Baseline 2000-01 Stanford 9 test results revealed that HISD students districtwide outperformed Project Su Casa students by achieving higher Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) and National Percentile Ranks (NPRs) on the reading, mathematics, language, environmental/science, and social science subtests at all grade levels. Notable findings of Project Casa students were NPRs that were within the normal range (40–60 NPRs) on the mathematics subtest at the 4th and 5th grade levels and on the language subtest at the 1st, 4th, and 11th grade levels.

- Overall, students, parents, teachers, and shelter providers recognized the strengths of Project Su Casa toward integrating homeless students in the mainstream school environment by providing the necessary instructional tools for learning and social support for stability. However, approximately 40% of the teachers surveyed reported that they did not have sufficient knowledge about homeless students.

- The expansion of Project Su Casa beyond its initial schools and shelter sites and the mobility of the homeless student population revealed the need for more social workers to provide direct services and training for providers regarding relevant issues.

Recommendations:

1. Improve the accountability system with contract agencies to better track the number of homeless students and parents served with Project Su Casa funds.

2. Based on Stanford 9 and TAAS tests results, central and campus level support staff need to develop strategies to improve student achievement.

3. Provide a link between the HISD database system and the McKinney Student Database system to improve accuracy of student identification information.

4. To accommodate new teachers involved in Project Su Casa, increase the number of professional development opportunities both schoolwide and districtwide. To facilitate planning for teachers, provide a professional development calendar incorporating on-going training.

Project Su Casa 2000–01
Houston Independent School District

Purpose: *To evaluate the effectiveness of Project Su Casa in relation to its goals and objectives in providing services for homeless students and their families for the 2000–01 school year.*

Design: *Descriptive, qualitative, and quantitative.*

Population: *A cohort of HISD students who were homeless and who were provided direct services through Project Su Casa staff, school teachers, and school administrators during the 2000–01 academic year. Students used in the study were included in the McKinney Student Database system.*

Methods: *Student achievement, including the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and Stanford 9 tests results of a cohort of Project Su Casa students were compared to HISD students districtwide. Opinions and concerns of participants were captured through surveys of students and parents who resided at two of the largest shelters in Houston and teachers who were affiliated with schools that enrolled large numbers of homeless students. Telephone and written surveys were administered to shelter personnel and subcontractors of the project.*

Findings: *TAAS and Stanford 9 test results showed that the district outperformed Project Su Casa students on most subtests at all grade levels. Documentation of social and educational services supported the types of activities and the numbers of participants outlined in the project's goals and objectives. The majority of students, teachers, parents, and shelter personnel were positive about the implementation of the project.*

Conclusions: *Project Su Casa is achieving its goals and objectives. However, there are concerns that may have an indirect impact on student achievement, including limited social work staff, tutorials funded through Project Su Casa, and on-going training on a consistent basis, particularly since the project increased its service delivery sites.*

Introduction

Program Description

For the past six years, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) has made aggressive efforts to comply with policies that were established by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and the Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 through Project Su Casa. Homeless students were identified, served, and integrated into the mainstream school environment. Project Su Casa staff removed enrollment and attendance barriers by serving as liaisons for this targeted population. Specifically, disruptions that are sometimes experienced with school transfers were minimized by allowing students to enroll with or without all of their school records. Parents were empowered with information about their rights regarding enrollment procedures, school bus transportation, and food services. Teachers, school administrators, and shelter providers were equipped with information on the issues that homeless students and their families face as a result of their mobility.

To further enhance the educational needs of homeless students, Project Su Casa provided enrichment activities that included regular and tutorial instruction as well as after-school programs. To improve the adjustment of students to the educational environment, school uniforms, supplies, and instructional materials were distributed to schools and shelters throughout the school year upon request of parents, teachers, and shelter staff. The HISD Transportation Department continued to ensure that students' trans-

portation needs were met through scheduling and rerouting of bus services. To enhance awareness and sensitivity, in-services were conducted by Project Su Casa staff to help teachers, school administrators, counselors, shelter personnel, social workers, nurses, registrars, data clerks, secretaries, technology personnel, bus drivers, Special Education/Child Study personnel, and psychologists learn more about the issues and the laws governing services to the homeless. Brochures were issued to parents and placed in public areas of service delivery sites for future reference. Parents and students were engaged in a variety of case management activities and social services to facilitate smooth transition into the district. Project director. social workers attended local and national conferences to learn how other programs have addressed the issue. Finally, through the Harris County Coalition for the Homeless, district personnel, shelter personnel, and representatives from local social service agencies collaborated monthly to stay abreast of their role in meeting the needs of the homeless. Moreover, these agencies served as referral sources, ensuring that homeless students received the maximum benefit from the project.

Program Personnel/Resources

For the 2000–01 school year, Project Su Casa funded two social workers to provide case management. Teachers provided tutorials at shelters. Instructional materials, school and gym uniforms, school supplies, emergency toiletries, books, and parent educational materials were purchased to enhance the program. Shelter libraries were equipped with videos and books. Transportation and admission fees for field trips were financially supported for students. Additional services included the nurturing program, child care at shelters, a teacher aide for the instructional program at Covenant House, emergency mental health services, evaluation services, and a summer camp counselor at the Salvation Army Family Shelter.

Program Cost and Funding Source

Refer to **Figure 1** for TEA grant allocations that supported Project Su Casa for the five year period, from 1996–97 through the 2000–01 school years. According to Figure 1, there has been moderate fluctuation in these funds over the five-year period. Specifically, from 1996–97 to 1997–98, the increase in funds by $43,000 was followed by the decrease in funds by $15,000 in 1998–99. The budget amount of $135,000 remained in effect for two years. Finally in 2000–01, the allocation for Project Su Casa increased from the previous year by $14,180 to $149,000. This amount was slightly below the highest allocation for the five year period of $150,000 in 1997–98.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

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- Goal One: Describe end-of-year demographic characteristics of Project Su Casa participants.
  Obj. One: A tracking and reporting system for demographic information gathering will be devel-

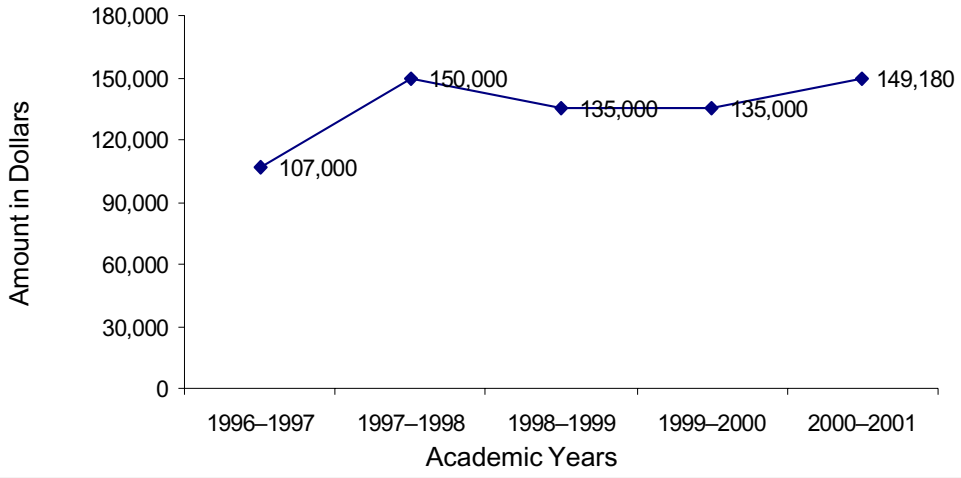

Figure 1: Project Su Casa Grant Allocation, 1996–1997 through 2000–2001.

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Obj. Two: Program demographics (age, grade, ethnicity, gender) will be tracked and summarized for all Project Su Casa participants by residential status and by school.

- Goal Two: Document the implementation of program objectives, including objectives of focus area programs.

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Methods

Data Collection

For the 2000–01 school year, the Project Su Casa student population was determined through the use of the McKinney Student Database system. Students included in the database were those who had been registered by the social workers and teachers. (See **Appendix A** for form). The student identification numbers were, then linked to the School Administrative Student Information database (SASI) and the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to obtain student demographic characteristics. Additional documentation of the Project Su Casa student population was obtained from attendance and service delivery logs maintained by Project Su Casa staff.

To obtain information on program operations, meetings were held with the program director of Project Su Casa, project social workers, as well as school principals and counselors at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center, J. Will Jones, Thompson, and Rusk elementary schools. Information was also obtained from shelter staff, including those at the Star of Hope Family shelter, the Transitional Living Center, Friendly Haven, Houston Area Women's Center, Glenshire Village, and Positive Steps. Additional information concerning project activities was retrieved from sign-in sheets, progress notes, logs, agenda, and reports from subcontractors.

Surveyed Sample

Students, teachers, parents, and shelter personnel were surveyed to determine their perceptions and opinions of the project. Survey items were created from concepts relative to the program's goals and objectives, and by merging ideas and interests of the teachers and the project administrator. A Likert-type scale was used to rate the degree to which students, parents, teachers, and shelter personnel agreed or disagreed with the statements. The ratings were: Strongly Agree-4, Agree-3, Disagree-2, and Strongly Disagree-1. Non-respondents were coded as "9." These results were not included in this study. In addition, a series of open-ended questions to determine the most liked and disliked components of the program were included. Shelters and multiple sites were selected for surveying to assure that the participants were homeless, that a sufficient number of participants were surveyed, and to improve the reliability of survey responses.

In the 2000–01 school year, surveyed students resided in the Salvation Army Family Residence, the Star of Hope Family Shelter, and the Transitional Living Center. Students present at the Transitional Living Center on January 3, 2001, and the Star of Hope Family Shelter on February 5, 2001, were included in the study. The schools represented in the study were Thompson, Rusk, and J. Will Jones elementary schools; Cullen, Gregory-Lincoln, and Ryan middle schools, and Yates, Wheatley, and Lamar high schools. The student survey was administered to a total of 52 students.

Parents residing at the Star of Hope Family Shelter

and the Transitional Living Center defined the parent sample. Surveys were distributed to residents by the evaluator, the project social workers, and the shelter administrators. A total of 15 parents were represented in the study.

To assure the reliability of the teachers' responses, those at schools affiliated with the three largest shelters in Houston, the Star of Hope Family Shelter, Transitional Living Center, and the Salvation Army Family Residence, were surveyed. Schools represented by teachers were J. Will Jones Elementary, Rusk Elementary, Gregory-Lincoln Education Center, and Thompson Elementary. All teachers present at the February 16, 2001, staff meeting at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center, the February 28, 2001, staff meeting at Thompson, the March 27, 2001, staff meeting at J.W. Jones, and at the May 8, 2001, staff meeting at Rusk participated in the survey. Regarding the teacher population at J. Will Jones, surveys were given to the school counselor who selected teachers with previous exposure to the program. A total of 89 teachers were administered the survey.

Staff at the Star of Hope Family Shelter and the Transitional Living Center were distributed the shelter personnel survey in February, 2001. In addition, the evaluator conducted a telephone survey with staff at Friendly Haven, DePelchin, Positive Steps, Houston Area Women's Center, and Glenshire Village. A total of 12 surveys were completed.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were used to report the data. Additional analysis was used to determine relationships among student, teacher, parent, and shelter personnel's perceptions over the past three years of the project. Qualitative analysis was based on the evaluator's observations of program operations.

Review of the Literature

Homelessness is known to have a negative effect on the academic success of students (Schwartz, 1995). The shelter life-style is not conducive to quality parenting, nutrition, or hygiene. It provides no sense of stability and offers minimal privacy for homework and family interaction. Furthermore, shelter life often exposes children to violence as victims, witnesses, or even participants (Schwartz, 1995). Research also showed that although moving once or twice during the public school years may not be harmful, high mobility lowered student achievement, particularly when the students were from low-income, less-educated families (Sewell, 1982; Straits, 1987). Additionally, students who attended the same school for their whole career were more likely to graduate; whereas, the most mobile of school populations, such as migrant students, had the highest rates of school failure and dropout (Lunon, 1986).

According to the Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (OEHCY), there were more than 125,000 school-age children in Texas who experienced homelessness during the course of a year (OEHCY, 2001). Numbers reflected a considerable increase since the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program was authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987. In response to these growing numbers of homeless students and problems inherent in being homeless, school districts created special programs to help them succeed academically, access social services, and secure a safe environment. The Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 further integrated homeless students into the mainstream school environment; increased homeless students' access to schools through designated homeless liaison personnel for school districts; encouraged high-quality approaches to meeting the needs of the homeless students by rewarding competitive subgrants; reduced the burden on states to collect data; required school districts to minimize disruptive school transfers for homeless students; and strengthened parental rights and required states to more broadly disseminate information about those rights.

Results

Goal 1: Student Participants of Project Su Casa

The McKinney Homeless database system was utilized for documenting the demographic characteristics of student participants of Project Su Casa was developed and implemented during the 2000–01 academic year. The PEIMS and SASI identification numbers of these students yielded the following results.

Refer to **Table 1** for the distribution of Project Su Casa students by grade, gender, and ethnicity as well as comparable results districtwide. As reflected in Table 1, in 2000–01, Project Su Casa served 670 students of the total 208,462 students in the district. (The number of homeless students served may be low

Table 1: Distribution of a Project Su Casa Student Population Compared to the District According to Grade, Gender, and Ethnicity, 2000–01

	Project Su Casa		District	
	N	%	N	%
Grade				
EE	2	0.3	564	0.3
Pre Kinder	60	9.0	10,983	5.3
Kinder	55	8.2	16,785	8.1
First	82	12.2	19,915	9.6
Second	68	10.1	18,916	9.1
Third	60	9.0	18,219	8.7
Fourth	40	6.0	17,549	8.4
Fifth	39	5.8	15,166	7.3
Sixth	34	5.1	14,467	6.9
Seventh	31	4.6	14,291	6.9
Eighth	37	5.5	13,753	6.6
Ninth	53	7.9	20,187	9.7
Tenth	28	4.2	10,585	5.1
Eleventh	15	2.2	9,138	4.4
Twelfth	3	0.4	7,944	3.8
Unknown	63	9.4	0	0.0
Gender				
Male	291	43.4	106,145	50.9
Female	353	52.7	102,317	49.1
Unknown	26	3.9	0	0.0
Ethnicity				
African Am.	426	63.6	66,930	32.1
Asian	6	0.9	6,098	2.9
Hispanic	108	16.1	114,561	55.0
Native Am.	8	1.2	116	0.1
White	68	10.1	20,757	10.0
Unknown	54	8.1	0	0.0
Total	670	100.0	208,462	100.0

because of difficulty obtaining information needed to complete the McKinney data collection form.) The largest proportion of Project Su Casa students was in the first grade, and the largest proportion of the students districtwide was in the ninth grade (12.2% versus 9.7%). Middle and high school students (grades sixth through twelfth) were underrepresented in the Project Su Casa student population compared to the district. Moreover, the majority of Project Su Casa students was female (52.7%). In contrast, the majority of the district students was male (50.9%). Additionally, in relation to ethnicity, there was a predominance of African American students among the Project Su Casa student participants and a predominance of Hispanic students districtwide (63.6% and 55.0%, respectively).

Table 2 reflects the distribution of identified Project Su Casa students according to their at-risk status and enrollment by program. According to Table 2, nearly 87% of the Project Su Casa student participants were on free/reduced lunch compared to 77% of the students districtwide. Additionally, there was a prevalence of Project Su Casa students who were recipients of instructional and/or support services through the federally-funded Title I program (75.9%). In comparison, about 59% of the students in the district were in Title I programs. Furthermore, only 6.1% of the Project Su Casa students were in the Limited English Proficient (LEP) program and 3.5% received supplemental instruction including reading, language arts, mathematics, and bilingual. (These findings may be reflective of low percentages of Hispanic students in Project Su Casa.) At the same time, LEP students districtwide reflected 27.2% of the total population, which was more than four times the rate of the Project Su Casa population. Bilingual students districtwide reflected 16.5% of the total population, which was more than five times the rate of the Project Su Casa population. Table 2 also shows that a slightly lower proportion of Project Su Casa students than students districtwide were "at-risk" of dropping out of school (46.1% versus 57.6%, respectively). This criteria was based on whether or not the students failed sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, academic courses, or were functioning at least two grade levels below expected.

Goal 2: Document the implementation of program objectives of focus area programs.

Project Su Casa staff provided a variety of services including tutorials, educational placement, consultations with teachers, parent education, transportation, presentations, counseling, crisis intervention, parent support groups, summer camp, referrals, col-

Table 2: Distribution of a Project Su Casa Student Population According to At-Risk Status and Enrollment by Program, 2000–01

	Su Casa		District	
	N	%	N	%
LEP	26	6.1	56,738	27.2
Free/Reduced Lunch	367	86.8	160,616	77.0
At Risk	195	46.1	120,139	57.6
Title 1	321	75.9	122,688	58.9
Special Ed.	65	15.4	20,647	9.9
Bilingual	15	3.5	34,441	16.5

laborative meetings, and training. The primary program sites included shelters, social service providers for the homeless, and schools. Public service announcements, locally distributed newsletters, and flyers were issued to communicate services offered and to present locations and times of school supplies and uniform distribution. (See **Appendix B** for samples.) Presented, as follows are the specific programming areas that were implemented by the project.

First, refer to **Table 3** for the primary service sites involved in Project Su Casa. This included shelters, other social service providers and schools. According to Table 3, there were 27 shelters and 10 other providers. Additionally, there were 27 elementary schools compared to 12 middle and 12 high schools.

An extended-time teacher at Transitional Living Center and Salvation Army Family Residence provided after-school tutorials and homework assistance. In addition, Gregory-Lincoln Education Center offered after-school tutorials for at-risk students through the Century 21 program. The Star of Hope Family Shelter and the Star of Hope Transitional Living Center offered similar services through Project Su Casa and the Houston READ Commission. Teachers' lesson plans reflected tutorials in various subject areas, including reading and mathematics, to support the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test (TAAS).

The special needs of homeless students required individualized Special Education programs. To facilitate the **educational placement** process, Project Su Casa staff attended Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings held at HISD schools and charter schools. **Consultations with teachers** assured appropriate placement for these students. Teachers, parents, and other service providers also engaged in the decision-making process for student placement, often with the coordination of Project Su Casa social workers. Additionally, Project Su Casa staff consulted regularly with teachers of homeless students about their instructional and after-school programs to en-

Table 3: Project Su Casa Primary Service Sites, 2000–01

HISD Schools				
Elementary (N=27)	**Middle (N=12)**	**High (N=12)**	**Shelters (N=27)**	**Other Providers (N=10)**
Anderson	Bellfort	C.E.P.	Associated Catholic Charities	Coalition for the Homeless
Argyle	Cullen	Chavez	Bread of Life Homeless Project	Communities In Schools
Bastian	Deady	Jones, J.	Covenant House Texas	Community Youth Services
Bell	Dowling	Kashmere	DePelchin Children's Center	Depelchin Children's Center
Bonham	Gregory-Lincoln	Lamar	Footprints in the Sand	Families Count
Blackshear	Lanier	Madison	Friendly Haven	Harris County Psychiatric Center
Douglas	Pershing	Milby	Glenshire Village (2)	Harris County Healthcare for the Homeless
Dodson	Revere	Sterling	Harris CPS Shelter	
Easter	Ryan	Westbury	Hold My Hand	Harris County Hospital District
Elrod	Smith, E. O.	Wheatley	House of Tiny Treasures	School-based Clinics
Fairchild	Thomas, A.	Worthing	Houston Area Women's Center	Healthy Students/Schools Initiative
Fondren	Welch	Yates	Jaime House	Mental Health/ Mental Retardation
Foster			Jasa House	
Grissom.			Magnificant House	
Halpin			Mercy and Grace	
Hobby			Patrice House	
Jones, J.W.			Positive Steps	
Jones, Anson			Roadrunner Inn	
Kelso			Salvation Army Family	
Memorial			S.E.A.R.C.H. Housing	
Milne			So La Ti Village	
Roberts			Star of Hope Family	
Rusk			Streetwise	
Shearn			Transitional Living Center	
Stevens			Trinity Life Center	
Thompson			White House Motel	
Whidby				

hance students' educational progress.

Project Su Casa also recognized the need to work with the parents of homeless students. **Parent education** was accomplished through a contract with the DePelchin Children's Center. These parent education classes and workshops were also offered at shelters including So La Ti, Transitional Living Center, Salvation Army, and the Covenant House. The standard intervention is "The Nurturing Program for Parents and Children: Birth to Four." Materials and curricula supplemented the sessions to address the specific needs of the class. The major objectives were to (1) model and teach empathy among family members; (2) teach and practice alternatives to physical discipline for behavior management; (3) understand the developmental stages of children; (4) learn appropriate skills in nurturing and providing limits for health development; (5) gain an awareness of the needs of the family; and (6) practice healthy ways to meet these needs. While the program was offered over a 12–15 week period, books and videos were permanently incorporated in the shelters' libraries for continuing education of current and future residents. Project Su Casa funding supported the positions of DePelchin Children's Center staff at shelters. These workers offered one-to-one consultation and referral, parent-child education classes, parent-child support groups, children's social skills groups, parent enrichment classes, and home-based therapy. Several classes involved the coordination of services between project staff and the Families Count program for students under the jurisdiction of the court system.

Project Su Casa provided varied modes of **transportation** assistance at the project and district's expense. Parents and students were offered bus tokens to attend appointments at referring agencies. HISD school buses transported parents and students to and from shelters to attend parent centers, open houses, and PTO meetings. Social workers transported parents and students to medical appointments, ARD meetings, parent conferences, and appointments to facilitate student enrollment. Daily transportation was an option for students who chose to remain in their previously attended school, rather than transfer to their newly zoned school. Transportation was provided upon request to students who participated in after-school and extracurricular activities such as dance, basketball, and other sports.

To increase awareness of external providers about homeless issues, **presentations** were made by the project social workers and the project director to district personnel and parents. Specific information on assisting students with school enrollment and laws governing the education of homeless students were covered in a group format. Staff distributed *Q & A: Questions and Answers Guide on the Education of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations* (1999). Selected topics were presented to project students within the classroom setting as well. Additional classroom presentations included, "How to Get Along in School," "Say No to Drugs," and "101 Ways to Develop Self-Esteem and Responsibility." Guest speakers from the Juvenile Probation Department Training Division discussed topics such as "Juvenile Probation and the Law." Representatives from the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA) provided lectures on drug prevention. Texas A&M University Department of Agriculture assisted students with consumer credit counseling and budgeting.

Counseling services were provided to individuals, groups, and families at schools and shelters. Topics for students centered on issues such as communication skills, conflict resolution, drug use and abuse in social relationships, social withdrawal, social conformity, and family support. Family therapy sessions were used to discuss effective communication, values, and perceptions about family and parental involvement in schools. Follow-up sessions were routine components of treatment to ensure continuity of care. Project Su Casa staff conducted **crisis counseling** and **parent support groups**. The purpose was to help parents learn alternative ways of managing their children's behavior and to gain better coping skills.

Jointly, Project Su Casa social workers, DePelchin Children's Center staff (Families Count), and Communities In Schools staff engaged families at the Transitional Living Center in life skills groups for children, women's issues groups, addiction education classes, substance abuse support groups, and therapeutic play groups. Services were facilitated through a screening assessment with a project counselor from Baylor College of Medicine as families enter the shelter. Through the financial support of Project Su Casa, DePelchin's Children's staff provided consultation to Transitional Living Center staff regarding project families and children experiencing difficulties adjusting to their shelter environment.

In the summer 2001, the Salvation Army provided a **summer camp** opportunity for homeless students, and Project Su Casa provided one camp counselor. The camp was located at Camp Strake in Conroe, Texas.

Project Su Casa linked students and their parents by providing **referrals** to social and medical services within HISD and to those of collaborating agencies. Specifically, students and their families were referred to the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County (MHMRA) for free evaluations, psychiatric evaluations, and psychotropic medications. Follow-up psychiatric hospitalization was facilitated by helping them obtain admittance to the Harris County Psychiatric Center as needed. Supplemental outpatient treatment was offered by the HISD Department of Psychological Services. Project Su Casa parents were linked to the S.E.A.R.C.H. Center's job readiness program to prepare them for the work environment. Families were also referred for free medical and dental treatment at Ben Taub General Hospital, Riverside Hospital, Rusk Clinic located at Rusk Elementary School, Baylor College of Medicine Clinic located at the Transitional Living Center, and Intra Care Hospital. Eyeglasses were provided by Prevent Blindness of Texas at no cost to the students at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center. The Robert Wood Johnson Homeless project was also made accessible to financially support optical services. Complementing the other services, the Pregnancy, Education, and Parenting Program (PEP) allowed pregnant teenagers to remain in school by providing support services such as childcare for the mother.

Collaborative meetings were attended at the local and state Coalition for the Homeless and the S.E.A.R.C.H Center to share resources. Project Su Casa coordinated with the Title 1 program to enroll children and their families into educational programs. HISD student support programs (Communities in Schools, Houston Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, Community Youth Services) provided education, counseling, field trips, and a parenting program. Project Su Casa staff worked with the Homeless Services Coordinating Council to solicit school supplies and to distribute those supplies to schools. In addition, Reliant Energy Entex donated shoes and school supplies for homeless children and youth attending Thompson Elementary School.

Project Su Casa staff attended social worker and counselor retreats provided by the HISD Guidance and Counseling Department. **Training** focused on the application of counseling skills to the targeted population. Program planning techniques were addressed as well as improved program operation and implementation. Project social workers conducted quarterly meetings to discuss better ways to work with the homeless. In addition, informative meetings on other relevant issues were held at the Coalition for the Homeless.

Goal 3: Document best practices

The following are some of the most prevalent barriers encountered by Project Su Casa staff during the 2000–01 school year followed by the solutions to overcome those barriers.

Barrier – Adaptation of students to changing environment.

Solution – Project Su Casa assisted homeless students and their families with counseling services to help them adjust to the changing school and living environment. Services were provided directly by project staff and through referrals, usually at clinics typically located on school sites.

Barrier – Gaps in academic skills.

Solution – Project Su Casa supported after-school programs at schools and tutorials at shelters. Contacts were made with teachers, tutors and parents to encourage parental involvement in the educational process.

Barrier – Homeless students and their families unaware of services available through the Stewart B. McKinney Act.

Solution – Project Su Casa informed homeless students and their families regarding their rights in lieu of their homeless status through the "parent paks." Since this was a mobile population, these "paks" were routinely left at the shelters, so that all families could be aware of the project and its services.

Barriers – School placement.

Solution – Project Su Casa staff continued to distribute copies of the *Q & A: Questions and Answers Guide on the Education of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations* (1999) to principals, nurses, data clerks, and other district personnel highlighting points related to lack of permanent address and incomplete immunization records. Social workers assisted in the transfer of those records, particularly when students were enrolled in Special Education. Additionally, Project Su Casa social workers offered transportation for students to clinics to update immunization records, if needed. Placement of students, particularly in special classes

were sometimes difficult. Letters were delivered to parents informing them of ARDs. Sometimes parents were transported to placements when they did not respond to letters.

Barrier – Transportation.
Solution – At the beginning of school, homeless students often experience transportation difficulties. Particularly during that period, Project Su Casa staff work closely with appropriate transportation department staff, such as routing and scheduling who in turn conferenced with bus drivers about homeless shelter stops.

Barrier – Language barrier.
Solution – As a result of the high concentration of Hispanic students in HISD, staff often encountered parents and students who only spoke Spanish. This becomes a challenge when the services requested cannot be delivered, because providers at some of the shelters were not Spanish proficient. Project Su Casa staff developed lists of providers who had Spanish-speaking staff. Referrals were made to those programs with Spanish-speaking providers to help assure that students and their parents were being served.

Barrier – Students required uniforms and school supplies.
Solution – Project Su Casa assisted the shelters with the purchase of school uniforms and supplies. Shelter providers assisted Project Su Casa staff to distribute these supplies throughout the academic year and as requested by homeless families. Schools were reimbursed when purchases were made for homeless students.

Barrier – Lack of sensitivity to homeless culture and issues.
Solution – Project Su Casa staff provided tours to shelters to see how homeless families live. Staff utilized videos that were requested from the state. Additionally, teachers worked with shelter providers to exchange ideas on how best to work with the homeless students and their families.

Barrier – Continuity in providing educational and social services.
Solution – The high mobility of homeless families often made it difficult for them to stay committed to following through with needed services. Project Su Casa attempted to improve continuity in services by helping them obtain a more permanent residence and advocated for their extended stay in shelters.

Barrier – Homeless students and their families often experienced mental health problems due to their homeless situation and their environment.
Solution – At schools with a high percentage of homeless students, regular individual and group sessions were conducted for homeless students and their parents. Referrals were made as needed and information regarding appropriate mental health contacts were disseminated.

Barrier – Difficulties contacting parents of homeless students.
Solution – Instructional staff was needed to communicate with parents to plan meetings such as ARDs or to discuss the student's conduct. Project Su Casa staff has strengthened the communication channel between parents and schools by serving as a liaison. On-call, twenty-four hour access to staff through pagers further facilitated this link.

Barrier – Absenteeism and Truancy.
Solution – Project Su Casa staff educated shelter staff and motel managers about the importance of school attendance and laws relating to absenteeism and truancy, thereby contributing to increased school attendance.

Goal 4: Collect baseline data on student achievement.

To document student achievement outcomes, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Stanford 9 tests were used. For percentage passing the TAAS test by grade level on the reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social science subtests, refer to **Table 5** for Project Su Casa students and **Table 6** for all students districtwide. For Stanford 9 test Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) and National Percentile Ranks (NPRs) of Project Su Casa students and all students districtwide, refer to **Tables 7**, **and 8. Table 9** presents the mean NCEs for the total Project Su Casa and the total district population. The results presented on both tests include all students who were tested in the Spring 2001.

According to Table 7, on TAAS, 116 Project Su Casa students were tested. This number represented

Table 5: TAAS Performance of a Project Su Casa Student Population, 2000–01

Grade	N Tested	Reading	Math	Writing	Science	Social Science
3	31	65	56			
4	19	84	83	94		
5	20	85	95			
6	13	77	83			
7	12	67	67			
8	14	64	71	73	50	27
10	7	100	71	83		
11						
12						
Total	116	75	74	85	50	27

less than one percent of the total number of students tested districtwide. In light of the low percentage of students tested in Project Su Casa, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The findings show that Project Su Casa students outperformed the district on the TAAS reading subtest at the 10th grade level and the writing subtest at the fourth grade level relative to the percentage passing those tests. Specifically 100% of the Project Su Casa students passed the reading subtest compared to 86% of the HISD students districtwide. Simultaneously, 94% of the Project Su Casa students passed the writing subtest compared to 89% of the students districtwide. Additionally, there were comparable percentage passing results for both groups on the reading subtest at the 6th grade level and on the mathematics subtest at the 5th grade level (77% and 95%, respectively). There was only slight variation between the groups on the mathematics subtest at the 6th grade level of two percentage points in favor of the district (83% versus 85%). Since there were no students in Project Su Casa who were tested at the 11th and 12th grade levels, comparisons could not be made.

Stanford 9 test results shown in Tables 7 and 8 revealed that all students in the district outperformed Project Su Casa students by achieving higher Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) and National Percentile Ranks (NPRs) than the Project Su Casa students on the reading, mathematics, language, environmental/ science, and social science subtests at all grade levels. Notable findings of Project Casa students were NPRs that were in the normal range (40–60 NPRs) on the mathematics subtest at the 4th and 5th grade levels and on the language subtest at the 1st, 4th, and 11th grade levels.

Table 9 reflects mean NCEs, NPRs and the mean differences of the total Project Su Casa population and the total district population. The findings reflected higher mean NCEs and NPRs for the district population. The mean differences between the groups relative to NCEs was highest on the mathematics subtest (12.1 NCEs) and lowest on the social science subtest. Additionally, the mean differences between the groups relative to NPRs was highest on the language subtest (16.7 NPRs) and the lowest on the social science subtest (12.3 NPRs). These results should be reviewed with caution due to the large number of students in the district compared to Project Su Casa.

Goal 5: Parental and Project Su Casa personnel

Table 6: Districtwide TAAS Performance of HISD Students, 2000–01

Grade	N Tested	Reading	Math	Writing	Science	Social Science
3	10,878	83	76			
4	11,741	89	89	89		
5	11,744	91	95			
6	11,382	77	85			
7	11,146	83	85			
8	11,154	89	89	79	87	66
10	8,397	86	86	84		
11	1,318	38	45	44		
12	524	27	44	37		
Total	76,442	86	87	84	87	66

Table 7: Stanford 9 Test Performance of a Project Su Casa Student Population, 2000–01

	N	Reading		Math		Language		Enviro./Science		Social Science	
Grade	Tested	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR
1	57	44	39	35	24	45	41	41	33		
2	40	43	37	34	23	34	22	35	23		
3	35	43	36	43	38	44	38	43	37	38	29
4	20	40	31	45	41	48	46	43	38	41	34
5	30	36	25	48	46	41	34	39	30	39	31
6	24	31	18	35	24	33	20	38	29	38	29
7	26	32	19	31	19	35	24	36	25	37	27
8	17	39	30	37	26	43	36	44	39	41	33
9	27	34	23	37	27	43	36	38	28	35	24
10	15	23	10	31	19	30	17	26	12	22	9
11	4	35	23	36	25	47	45	38	29	39	30

opinions and concerns will be solicited and described. Youth opinions and concerns will be identified by interviews and surveys.

Students, teachers, parents, and shelter personnel were surveyed to determine their opinions about the impact of Project Su Casa. Additionally, these groups were asked to respond to questions asked on the McKinney Education Program survey. The results of the surveys are as follows.

Student Opinions

Table 10 presents the opinions and concerns of fifty-two students about the impact of Project Su Casa during the 2000–01 academic year. The student survey can be found in **Appendix C**. According to Table 10, the majority of students were in agreement with all of the survey items, reflecting an overall positive opinion about the issues that were addressed. Among the survey items, the most agreement was to the item, "I am properly dressed when I go to school" (92%). This was followed by the item, "I like to attend school every day" (88%). The most disagreement was to the item, "I have all of the school supplies that I need to complete my school work" (42%). This was followed by, "I need more help to improve my grades in school" (37%).

Teacher Opinions and Concerns

Table 11 reveals the opinions and concerns of 89 teachers on the impact of Project Su Casa for the 2000–01 academic year. The teacher survey can be seen in **Appendix D**. As seen in Table 11, the majority of teachers were in agreement with the items, "The HISD Homeless Program can be accessed to provide students with resources, such as school supplies and uniforms when needed" (50%) and "I feel positive about the continuation of the HISD Homeless Program"

Table 8: Stanford 9 Test Performance of HISD Students Districtwide, 2000–01

	N	Reading		Math		Language		Enviro./Science		Social Science	
Grade	Tested	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR
1	12,911	57	63	51	52	58	64	48	46		
2	12,677	51	51	52	53	49	48	45	41		
3	12,550	49	48	55	59	51	52	50	50	46	42
4	13,498	48	46	55	60	55	59	48	46	46	43
5	13,787	46	42	54	58	51	51	47	44	45	41
6	13,937	44	38	51	52	48	47	47	45	44	38
7	13,822	43	36	45	40	47	45	47	44	43	36
8	13,442	43	37	43	37	47	44	46	42	46	42
9	16,400	37	27	46	43	47	44	43	37	43	36
10	9,818	40	31	46	43	45	41	44	39	40	32
11	7,645	42	35	48	46	49	47	44	39	48	46

Table 9: Stanford 9 Test Performance of a Project Su Casa Student Population, 2000–01

	Mean Scores									
	Reading		Math		Language		Enviro./Science		Social Science	
	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR	NCE	NPR
Project Su Casa	36.4	26.5	37.5	28.4	40.3	32.6	38.3	29.4	36.7	27.3
District	45.5	41.3	49.6	49.4	49.7	49.3	46.3	43.0	44.6	39.6
Mean Difference	9.1	14.8	12.1	21.0	9.4	16.7	8.0	13.6	7.9	12.3

(55%). Nearly half of the surveyed teachers (48%) indicated that they have become more sensitive regarding the educational needs of homeless students since the implementation of the program and that the program has had a positive impact on students.

Parent Opinions and Concerns

Table 12 shows the parents' opinions and concerns about Project Su Casa. The parent survey can be found in **Appendix E**. As can be seen in Table 12, the majority of parents were in agreement with five of the eleven survey items. The highest level of agreement was reflected by 64% of the surveyed parents on the items, "The HISD Homeless Program social workers have been available for consultations at schools and at shelters," and "My child's teachers exhibit a positive attitude toward students who are experiencing homelessness."

Shelter Personnel Opinions and Concerns

Table 13 reflects the shelter personnels' opinions and concerns about Project Su Casa. The shelter personnel survey can be found in **Appendix F**. The highest level of agreement was on the survey item, "I have sufficient knowledge regarding the educational needs of shelter residents" (92%). This was followed by the item, "The goals and objectives of Project Su Casa are clear to me" (84%). The majority of shelter personnel were also in agreement that they would like to see a continuation of Project Su Casa.

Table 10: Opinions of a Project Su Casa Student Sample, 2000–01

	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
I like to attend school every day.	46	88	4	8
I have all of the school supplies that I need to complete my school work.	30	58	22	42
The teachers at my school care about the students that are homeless.	34	65	9	17
I am doing better in school since I came to this school.	35	67	14	27
Tutoring and homework assistance helps me perform better in school.	36	69	9	17
My teachers think that I am important.	41	79	7	13
I am properly dressed when I go to school.	48	92	4	8
I am very proud to be a student at my school.	38	73	8	15
I need more help to improve my grades in school.	31	60	19	37
Overall, I am satisfied with my school.	38	73	10	19
I can talk to the HISD Homeless Program social workers about my problems.	31	60	5	10
This will be a good school for my friends to attend.	33	63	10	19

Table 11: Opinions of a Project Su Casa Teacher Sample, 2000–01

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I am aware of the HISD Homeless Program.	22	25	19	21	7	8	18	20
I have sufficient knowledge regarding the educational barriers faced by homeless students.	17	19	20	22	17	19	21	24
I have become more sensitive regarding the educational needs of homeless students since the implementation of HISD Homeless Program.	18	20	25	28	7	8	18	20
Students are able to adjust better to the school environment as a result of the HISD Homeless Program.	14	16	26	29	20	22	19	21
The HISD Homeless Program can be accessed to provide students with resources, such as school supplies and uniforms when needed.	17	19	28	31	5	6	23	26
Students in my class who live in shelters have more behavioral problems than most other students.	4	4	13	15	33	37	21	24
The HISD Homeless Program social workers have been available for consultations at schools and shelters.	13	15	25	28	7	8	22	25
Overall, the HISD Homeless Program has had a positive impact on my students.	18	20	25	28	9	10	21	24
I feel positive about the continuation of the HISD Homeless Program.	26	29	23	26	5	6	17	19

McKinney Education Program Survey

Teachers, school administrators, parents, and shelter personnel were asked to respond to questions provided on the McKinney Education Program Survey. The questions as well as their responses to the questions follow:

Describe any successes that you have noted that resulted from the McKinney Program.

Teacher/School Administrator Responses

- The program allows the community to reach out to the client.
- The homeless program offers security and shelters to children who are in need; it provides educational opportunities that would be lacking.
- Provide food, shelter, and transportation for students; help counsel students.
- That the students are able to appear as though they have all the same supplies and materials as other students even if they have been acquired through the program; it is very discreet; Ms. Jones is great!
- The program tries to tailor the students to the school environment.
- The personal touch and work of the social worker to ease the transition.
- They have sufficient supplies.
- It is excellent in helping to increase contact with parents.

Overall, the teachers and school administrators responses to the program's successes indicate that the homeless students are integrated into the mainstream school environment. The students were provided necessary tools to perform academically.

Parent Responses

- They try to work with the children when they're having problems in school to help benefit the child by learning and helping the parents from having to take off from work to rectify the situation.
- Supplies, clothing, field trips.
- Some are concerned about the homeless people.
- A good education.
- School buses and after school activities.
- They are very concerned about the children and will do all they can.
- The clinic located at my child's school. The

Table 12: Opinions of a Project Su Casa Parent Sample, 2000–01

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I am aware of the HISD Homeless Program.	4	29	2	14	2	14	3	21
My child has adjusted better to school because of the HISD Homeless Program.	3	21	1	7	4	29	4	29
The HISD Homeless Program helps my child perform better in school by providing counseling, clothing, and uniforms.	3	21	3	21	3	21	3	21
The education that my child receives is better than I thought it would be.	2	14	4	29	4	29	2	14
The educational services (i.e., tutoring, homework assistance, counseling) provided by the HISD Homeless Program helps my child perform better in school.	5	36	2	14	2	14	1	7
My child has shown improvements in his/her academic performance since involvement in the HISD Homeless Program.	3	21	2	14	3	21	2	14
The HISD Homeless Program social workers have been available for consultations at schools and at shelters.	7	50	2	14	1	7	0	0
My child's teachers exhibit a positive attitude toward students who are experiencing homelessness.	7	50	2	14	1	7	1	7
The school provides an adequate number of opportunities for me to be involved in my child's education.	5	36	2	14	0	0	5	36
The HISD Homeless Program helps provide the school supplies that my child needs to be successful in school.	4	29	3	21	1	7	3	21
The HISD Homeless Program facilitates school enrollment for my child by obtaining immunization records, lunch application, special education placement, and bus transportation.	2	14	1	7	3	21	4	29

teaching staff are concerned with the extra help my child needs. Their open door policy.

In summary, parents recognized that the program is concerned about the well-being of homeless students, including their special needs. The parents appreciated the staff's efforts in implementing relevant services such as healthcare, transportation and after-school activities.

Shelter Personnel Responses

- Provided the families with uniforms, reducing financial strain, school supplies.
- Kids have someone that they know, that they can come to that knows their situation and not be embarrassed and I have someone that I can work with in the school and we can work together
- The coordination of Admissions, Review, Dismissal (ARD) meetings.
- Liaison to help identify children at-risk -- emotionally and educationally

The shelter staff responded that the families were served in a caring and helpful manner. The families were not isolated in their personal situation.

Describe any weaknesses you have noted about the McKinney Program.

Teacher/School Administrator Responses

- Due to scheduling, the campus program has not been fully effective.
- The briefness of the students in school is disruptive.
- None!! The program is perfect!!
- Social workers cannot be on campus at all times.
- It causes a negative effect on other students and teachers. Students often carry excess baggage with negative attitudes. They often move and cause lots of paperwork (grade books, transfer

Table 13: Opinions of a Project Su Casa Shelter Personnel Sample, 2000–01

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The goals and objectives of Project Su Casa are clear to me.	2	17	8	67	2	17	0	0
I have sufficient knowledge regarding the educational needs of shelter residents.	2	17	9	75	1	8	0	0
Training provided by the HISD Homeless Program staff has been very beneficial.	1	8	3	25	4	33	4	0
Families who receive supportive services, such as counseling from the HISD Homeless Program seem to be more socially adjusted.	2	17	3	25	4	33	0	0
I have been able to provide better services to homeless families since the involvement of the HISD Homeless Program.	1	8	4	33	4	33	0	0
The resources that I have are sufficient for working with the HISD Homeless Program families	0	0	5	42	5	42	1	8
I would like to see a continuation of the HISD Homeless Program.	6	50	4	33	1	8	0	0

papers, etc.).
- There should be a monthly pamphlet that describes the gains and the goals of the program.

Overall, teacher and school administrator responses varied in regard to the weaknesses of the program. For example, one respondent recognized the ineffectiveness of the program due to scheduling, while another respondent considered the program perfect. However, respondents indicated a need for quality personal and instructional time with students. Respondents indicated an interest in a newsletter to provide practical information about the program.

Parent Responses
- My children need shoes and uniforms. They have shoes that are worn out. Only one uniform to wear.
- Not enough uniforms and not enough tutoring.
- There needs to be more tutoring in the shelter.

The parents' responses reflects a greater need for services such as clothing and tutorials. These services are essential beyond the regular school schedule and setting and should be fully implemented in the shelter environment.

Shelter Personnel Responses
- Transporting students to other schools. Students have to get Metro bus, shelter has to provide tokens.
- They don't have sufficient time to talk about individual students; need more staff, kids' needs can be met better because one person can't do everything.
- Case workers do not seem to have enough time to work with all the children in need of services.

Shelter personnel recognized the need for more staff and service delivery hours. Some of the services provided by the project in need of improved delivery included counseling, case management, transportation, and uniforms.

What steps do you recommend to be taken to improve the McKinney Program?

Teacher/School Administrator Responses
- Open communication with teachers - the sharing of information such as school records.
- Make sure new teachers are inserviced as quickly

as possible.
- I believe that there should be a transition classroom in the schools that have high mobility rates in order to spend a couple of days acclimating the students to the new environment.
- Uniforms for students from the shelter - they stand out because they are the only ones without uniforms; supplies.
- Additional training for teachers on how to deal effectively with this special population.
- More individual information on each child.
- Help students adjust to be moved around throughout the year.
- Better monitoring of the program as it is implemented in schools.
- Provide more information about the benefits of the program and resources.

The teachers and school administrators recommended a number of improvements for the program. Some of these include informative communication among teachers, students, and parents. An example of this would be training for staff serving the homeless population, particularly for new teachers. Accountability standards should be introduced and closely monitored for the program's implementation.

Parents
- Still learning about it, not sure.
- Improve feedback from social workers.
- Increase visibility of the social workers and the program.

Overall, some parents seemed uninformed about the program. Some respondents, however, acknowledged the need for social workers.

Shelter Personnel
- The children have special needs at school that are not addressed.
- Insufficient finances for uniforms and school activities.
- Many children require special services or emotional help and do not receive adequate help.
- The kids need more counseling; Ms. Jones [Project Su Casa counselor] needs more help.
- A voucher should be available to get school P.E. uniforms and regular uniforms.
- Case workers do not seem to have enough time to work with all the children in need of services.

Shelter personnel recognized the need for more counseling services and staff to address the special needs of the homeless children. Access and distribution of school uniforms limited the availability of these resources for the homeless students.

Discussion

For the past six years, Project Su Casa supported HISD's academic goals of providing equal access and educational opportunities for all students, including those who were homeless. These economically disadvantaged, primarily African American and Hispanic students, not only benefitted from services provided through the project, but also received Title 1 services. Students were mainly represented from elementary schools, although middle and high school students were also integrated into the program.

Progressively, Project Su Casa has arranged tutorials and enrichment activities, issued instructional materials, school uniforms, school supplies, and emergency toiletries to homeless students. Shelter libraries were equipped with videos and books. Educational field trips for students included transportation and admission waivers. Additional services were parent education, child care at shelters, teacher aide for the instructional programs at shelter sites, ESL instruction, mental health treatment, referrals, and evaluations. Project Su Casa social workers counseled students and their families on their social and emotional needs. They, along with teachers, school administrators, and community service providers, were educated concerning the legal rights of the homeless. The HISD Transportation Department managed absenteeism, truancy, and dropout by assuring transportation services for regular school attendance, after-school educational and social programs, and family meetings.

The McKinney Student Database system for tracking the Project Su Casa student population was utilized within the past school year to assist in the mobility issue that was frequently faced by homeless families. Project staff continued to document specific direct services including referrals to collaborating agencies, consultations with teachers, parent education, transportation, presentations, guest speakers, crisis intervention, and school visits. Agenda, sign-in sheets, progress notes, reports of subcontractors, and logs were provided containing the types of activities as well as the numbers of participants.

Achievement test performance of Project Su Casa students showed that they lag behind the district in

percentage of students passing TAAS and National Percentile Ranks on Stanford 9 on all grade levels and on most subtest taken. These student performance findings further support the need for Project Su Casa and the types of educational assistance that it provides.

Opinions and concerns of Project Su Casa participants were obtained by administering surveys to key stakeholders at project schools and primary shelter sites. In general, the project continues to be well accepted by the recipients of its products and services. Specifically, students continued to acknowledge that teachers, tutorials, and homework assistance helped to increase their academic performance and that they were adequately supplied with educational materials to complete their school work. Teachers indicated that homeless students were being integrated into the school environment. Parents appreciated the staff's efforts in implementing the project. Shelter providers recognized that the project staff were helpful and treated families with care. On the other hand, some of the participants recognized that the limited number of staff impacted the delivery of services to all involved in the project. Consequently, the need for more training, more tutorials, and improved communication were evident. Changes in these areas could only benefit those involved and have a positive impact on student achievement.

Recommendations

1. Improve the accountability system with contract agencies to better track the number of homeless students and parents served with Project Su Casa funds.

2. Based on Stanford 9 and TAAS tests results, central and campus level support staff need to develop strategies to improve student achievement.

3. Provide a link between the HISD database system and the McKinney Student Database system to improve accuracy of student identification information.

4. To accommodate new teachers involved in Project Su Casa, increase the number of professional development opportunities both schoolwide and districtwide. To facilitate planning for teachers, provide a professional development calendar incorporating on-going training.

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Appendix A

Appendix A (continued)

Appendix B

Appendix B (continued)

Appendix B (continued)

Appendix C

PROJECT SU CASA
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (HISD) HOMELESS PROGRAM
STUDENT SURVEY (2000-2001)

INSTRUCTIONS: The goal of this survey is to help us understand how you feel about Project Su Casa (HISD Homeless Program). This program is being implemented by HISD social workers, Marsha Jones and Manuel Acevedo along with Project Director, Constance Thompson. We would appreciate you taking a few minutes to answer the questions in this survey. Your answers are very important to us. Please do not write your name on this survey so that your answers will be anonymous.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Please mark "A" if your answer is "Yes" and "B" if your answer is "No".

	Yes	No	N/A
1. I like to attend school every day.	A	B	C
2. I have all the school supplies that I need to complete my school work.	A	B	C
3. The teachers at my school care about the students that are homeless.	A	B	C
4. I am doing better in school since I came to this school.	A	B	C
5. Tutoring and homework assistance helps me perform better in school.	A	B	C
6. My teachers think that I am important.	A	B	C
7. I am properly dressed when I go to school.	A	B	C
8. I am very proud to be a student at my school.	A	B	C
9. I need more help to improve my grades in school.	A	B	C
10. Overall, I am satisfied with my school.	A	B	C
11. I can talk to the HISD Homeless Program social workers about my problems.	A	B	C
12. This will be a good school for my friends to attend.	A	B	C

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

Appendix D

PROJECT SU CASA
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (HISD) HOMELESS PROGRAM
TEACHER SURVEY (2000-2001)

Dear HISD teacher: Please take a few moments to give us your valued opinions on Project Su Casa (HISD Homeless Program). This program is being implemented by HISD social workers, Marsha Jones and Manuel Acevedo along with Project Director, Constance Thompson. Your answers will be kept anonymous. The results will be reported in grouped form and will be used to improve the program. When you complete this survey, please use the enclosed envelope to return it to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability.

Please use the scale below to tell us how you feel about the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1. I am aware of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I have sufficient knowledge regarding the educational barriers faced by homeless students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I have become more sensitive regarding the educational needs of homeless students since the implementation of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Students are able to adjust better to the school environment as a result of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The HISD Homeless Program can be accessed to provide students with resources, such as school supplies and uniforms when needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Students in my class who live in shelters have more behavioral problems than most other students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. The HISD Homeless Program social workers have been available for consultations at schools and shelters.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Overall, the HISD Homeless Program has had a positive impact on my students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I feel positive about the continuation of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix D (continued)

10. Approximately, how many hours of training have you accumulated in the last school year on the educational needs of homeless children? (Please circle your answer.)

A. 1-8 hours B. 9-16 hours C. 17-24 hours D More than 24 hours

Comments:

11. What steps do you recommend be taken to improve the HISD Homeless Program?

_____
_____
_____
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_____

12. As it relates to the activities of the program, what are the major strengths of the HISD Homeless Program?

_____
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_____

13. As it relates to the activities of the program, what are the major weaknesses of the HISD Homeless Program?

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_____
_____
_____

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.
Please use the enclosed envelope to return the completed survey
to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability, Rt. 10.

Appendix E

PROJECT SU CASA

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (HISD) HOMELESS PROGRAM

PARENT SURVEY (2000-2001)

Dear Parent: The goal of this survey is to help us understand how you feel about Project Su Casa (HISD Homeless Program). This program is being implemented by HISD social workers, Marsha Jones and Manuel Acevedo along with Director, Constance Thompson. We would appreciate you taking a few minutes to answer the questions in this survey. Your answers are very important to us. Please do not write your name on this survey so that your answers will be anonymous. When you have completed this survey, please place it in the attached envelope and return it to a HISD Homeless Program service provider. ***Thank you very much for your cooperation.***

Please use the scale below to tell us how you feel about the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1. I am aware of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. My child has adjusted better to school because of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The HISD Homeless Program helps my child perform better in school by providing counseling, clothing, and uniforms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. The education that my child receives is better than I thought it would be.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The educational services (i.e., tutoring at shelters, homework assistance, in-class assistance, and field trips) provided by the HISD Homeless Program help my child achieve in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. My child has shown improvements in his/her academic performance since involvement in the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. The HISD Homeless Program social workers have been available for consultations at schools and at shelters.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. My child's teachers exhibit a positive attitude toward students who are experiencing homelessness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. The school provides an adequate number of opportunities for me to be involved in my child's education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. The HISD Homeless Program helps provide the school supplies that my child needs to be successful in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. The HISD Homeless Program facilitates school enrollment for my child by obtaining immunization records, lunch application, special education placement, and bus transportation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix E (continued)

12. As it relates to the activities of the program, what are the major strengths of the HISD Homeless Program?

_____

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_____

13. As it relates to the activities of the program, what are the major weaknesses of the HISD Homeless Program?

_____

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Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

Appendix F

PROJECT SU CASA
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (HISD) HOMELESS PROGRAM
SHELTER PERSONNEL AND OTHER HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS SURVEY (2000-2001)

Dear Homeless Service Provider: Please take a few moments to give us your valued opinions on Project Su Casa (HISD Homeless Program). This program is being implemented by HISD social workers, Marsha Jones and Manuel Achieved along with Project Director, Constance Thompson. Your answers will be kept anonymous. The results will be reported in grouped format and will be used to improve the program. When you complete this survey, please use the enclosed envelope to return it to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability.

Please use the scale below to tell us how you feel about the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1. The goals and objectives of the HISD Homeless Program are clear to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I have sufficient knowledge regarding the educational needs of homeless children.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Training provided by the HISD Homeless Program staff has been very beneficial.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Families who receive supportive services, such as counseling from the HISD Homeless Program seem to be more socially adjusted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I have been able to provide better services to homeless families since the involvement of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. The resources that I have are sufficient for working with the HISD Homeless Program families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I would like to see a continuation of the HISD Homeless Program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix F

8. Approximately, how many have you accumulated in the last two school years on working with the educational needs of homeless children? (Please circle your answer.)

A. 1-5 hours B. 6-10 hours C. 11-15 hours D. 16-20 hours E. More than 20 hours

Comments:

9. In your opinion, what are some of the special issues you face when working with homeless families?

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_____
_____
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_____

10. As it relates to the activities of the program, what are the major strengths of the HISD Homeless Program?

_____
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11. As it relates to the activities of the program, what are the major weaknesses of the HISD Homeless Program?

_____
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_____

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.
Please use the enclosed envelope to return the completed survey
to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability, Rt. 10.hours of training