

Bend-La Pine Schools Serve 64% More Homeless Students

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Full-time liaison credited for identifying and providing services to area students in need

More homeless students have been identified in the Bend-La Pine Schools (BLS) this year than ever before. To date, more than 280 BLS students are identified as homeless. On the same date in 2005, 180 students were identified as being homeless. The additional 100 students represent a 64% increase in homeless students this year over last year. This number is expected to grow as the school year continues. A total of 391 homeless students were served during the 2005-06 school year, 240 during the 2004-05 school year and 280 during the 2003-04 school year. BLS attributes much of the increase in homeless students being identified and provided necessary assistance to the districts Project HELP Coordinator homeless liaison position. Student Services Coordinator Dana Arntson says, "The main job of the Project HELP Coordinator is to ensure that every student is given the right to continue to attend their school of origin, get signed up for free or reduced lunch, have the supplies and clothing they need, and have access to transportation to get to their school of origin -" even if they are currently homeless." State School Superintendent Susan Castillo agrees, "They provide homeless students with wonderful support to ensure they can succeed in school. While we can't provide housing, we can provide education" and that's a major factor in preventing chronic poverty and homelessness in future generations." The results of the 2005-06 Oregon homeless student count are listed below:

• 13,159 of Oregon's 559,244 K-12 students (2.4%) and 391 of Bend-La Pine Schools (BLS) 14,675 K-12 students (2.67%) were homeless at some point during the year.

• Statewide, 5,912 homeless students were enrolled in grades K-5 while 247 BLS homeless students were enrolled in grades K-5.

• Statewide, 2,937 homeless students were enrolled in grades 6-8 while 71 BLS homeless students were enrolled in grades 6-8.

• Statewide, 4,310 homeless students were enrolled in grades 9-12 while 73 homeless students were enrolled in grades 9-12.

• Statewide, the greatest numbers of homeless students were 12th graders (1,233) while the greatest numbers of BLS homeless students were 3rd and 5th graders (47 students/grade).

• Statewide, 1,939 students were unaccompanied homeless minors who had been abandoned by parents, or had runaway from home or foster care placement while 49 BLS students found themselves in

similar situations.

Â· Statewide, at the time of their enrollment, 61% of homeless students in Oregon reported sharing housing with relatives or friends due to economic hardship or similar reason; 17% reported living in a homeless shelter; 15% were reported as unsheltered or living in substandard housing; and 7% were living in motels.

Â· At the time of their enrollment, 52% of BLS homeless students reported sharing housing with relatives or friends due to economic hardship or similar reason; 16% reported living in a homeless shelter or transitional housing; 19% were reported as unsheltered or living in substandard housing; and 13% were living in motels.

Castillo credits the work of local district Liaisons for providing services to homeless students that include school enrollment, extra transportation and tutoring, and referrals for shelter, housing, health care and counseling services.

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