



**Supporting Homeless
Students & Families
Internship: A School
District/University
Partnership**

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Objectives

- Introduce the Windham community
- Introduce the Windham Collaborative Assistance Project
- Explain the University/District collaboration
- Discuss past collaboration achievements
- Discuss recommendations & future goals

Windham, Connecticut

- Shares the town with Eastern Connecticut State University
- 20 minutes from Storrs, UConn
- Richly diverse
- Connecticut's second poorest community



2013 Windham School Demographics

- 3,124 students in grades k-12
- 60% of student population is Latino/Latina
- 35% of students come from homes where English is not the primary language



Windham School Demographics

- 79% of students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch
- June 2014 – Over 160 students identified as homeless or living in a homeless situation (*5% of the student population*)
 - 22 students in high school, 34 in middle school, and 84 in elementary school
- October 2014 - Over 60 students identified
- April 2015 - Over 100 students identified

What is WCAP?

Windham Collaborative Assistance Project

“The Windham Collaborative Assistance Project is designed to promote student success, support families, inform educators, and enhance opportunities for homeless students in the Windham community.”

What does WCAP do?

- Committed to serving Windham's homeless children & youth
- Designed to remove the barriers for homeless children
- Goal: to ensure that ALL homeless children and youth are enrolled in schools & working to maintain their educational advancement, housing stability, and life skills

How did the university partnership get started?

- In 2010, an honors student at the University of Connecticut wanted to research teacher attitudes about homelessness.
- In the spring of 2011, a conversation began between the UCONN Teacher Preparation Program and the district homeless liaison office.
- In the fall of 2011, this collaboration resulted in the first cohort of 3 Master's students being assigned to an internship in the Windham Public School's homeless liaison office.



The University of Connecticut's teacher prep program

Integrated Bachelors/Master's program

- Acceptance into program in junior year, full time student teaching in senior year, internship in Masters year
- Master's internship is 18 hours per week
- Focus of Masters year - developing teacher leadership skills
- 15-18 graduate credits/semester alongside internship

What do the Interns do?

- Get to know the community and the resources it has to offer for people living in a homeless situation
 - WAIM (Windham Area Interfaith Ministry)
 - Soup Kitchen
 - Shelters



What do the interns do?

- Work directly with individuals in Windham's Office of Homeless Family Support to develop & coordinate effective intervention strategies for homeless students
 - Each intern is assigned a "caseload" of students
- Work with school staff to identify homeless students and families who qualify for support
 - Faculty meetings
 - Meeting family liaisons, administration, staff

What do the interns do?

- Work in close collaboration with teachers to identify needs and determine how to best support students
- Work with a caseload of identified students on a regular, scheduled basis
 - one-on-one or small group
 - in the classroom or pullout
 - monitor attendance and progress reports
 - develop awareness in community about homeless issues as well as available community resources

Year 1 Interns

- Established roles and responsibilities of interns
- Collaborated with family liaisons to connect with school and community personnel
- Developed informational materials about homelessness in both English and Spanish
- Learned about community culture and developed relationships with students
 - Focused particularly at the secondary level
- Researched welcoming strategies for new families in the district, particularly for those with limited English proficiency

Year 2 interns

- Developed procedures and schedules for working with students in classrooms
 - Focused at the elementary level
- Set up the protocol to meet with faculty and administrators at the start of the school year
- Collaborated with community organizations to meet students' needs
- Investigated the role of parent involvement (both internal and external) in literacy development in grades K-3

Year 3 interns

- Investigated awareness of issues of homelessness and community resources
- Created a survey for teachers, staff, and parents
 - 73% of staff underestimated the real number of homeless students in the community.
 - School professionals and members of the community named transportation and school uniforms as the most important resources

Year 4 Interns

- Continue to provide support in classrooms at elementary and secondary levels
- Investigated student awareness of homelessness
- Designed & implemented a service learning curriculum focused on homelessness
 - Worked directly with middle school students
 - Left curriculum for future implementation
 - Raised student awareness of homelessness

Year 4 Interns

- Provided one-on-one academic, social, and emotional support to 5 children of the same family spread across the elementary, middle, and high school level
- Worked collaboratively with the school liaisons, after school program coordinators, ESL teachers, classroom teachers, and Holy Family Shelter staff to ensure the individual student's and family's needs were being addressed and taken care of

Future goals

- Strengthen the local McKinney-Vento teams
- Develop stronger means to identify and reach out to unaccompanied youth
- Provide professional development for teachers at the start of the school year to help identify homeless students
- Improve the way in which we identify unaccompanied youth in the community

The “Take Home” Message

- Think broadly about “at risk” and who needs support
- Maintain a flexible mindset and be prepared for constant change
- Find opportunities to connect with families outside of school or service settings

The “Take Home” Message

- Educate teachers and staff about the signs of homelessness in students
- Think creatively about connections and supports in your community
(e.g., schools, colleges, social organizations, adult volunteers, etc.)



HOMELESS STUDENTS ARE ...

2 TIMES AS LIKELY AS THEIR HOUSED PEERS TO SCORE POORLY ON STANDARDIZED TESTS IN MATH AND READING.

3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE PLACED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

4 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL.

8 TO 9 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO REPEAT GRADES.

SOURCES

Source: The Education
Rights Institute
Educational Needs of Homeless
Children and Youth, 1992
and
National Center on Family Homelessness
Homeless Children Report
(http://www.nchf.org)

Let's take a moment...

What creative opportunities for partnership exist in your community to address pressing issues of homelessness?

A decorative graphic consisting of several colored rectangular bars and rounded corners. A vertical purple bar is on the left. Below it, a blue bar extends horizontally. To the right of the blue bar, there are three more horizontal bars: a purple one, a yellow one, and a red one. The red bar has a rounded right end. Below the red bar, a yellow bar extends horizontally. The entire graphic is set against a black background.

Questions?

UConn Resources to Support At-Risk Secondary Students

- **ConnCAP** - www.cap.uconn.edu/cp
- **First Star Academy** - www.cap.uconn.edu/fsa
Both programs provide ongoing support year-round for students in grades 9-12 and a summer residential component at UConn's Storrs campus.
- **Student Support Services (SSS)** – www.cap.uconn.edu/ssss
Provides a six-week summer program prior to the fall semester of freshmen year and an assigned counselor
- **Educational Talent Search** - www.cap.uconn.edu/ets
Can begin as early as 6th grade; includes free SAT prep

Other Useful Resources

- For questions about the partnership process, contact **Bill Stover**, the Director of Family and Community Partnerships at Windham Public Schools - wStover@windham.k12.ct.us
- National Association for Educating Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHYC) - <http://www.naehcy.org/>