

Nearly 150,000 New York City public school students are homeless

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The ever-growing crisis of housing and homelessness in New York City is forcefully emphasized by newly released data which documents that during the last school year more than one in ten public school students, approximately 150,000 out of 1.1 million, were without permanent housing. This is the highest number ever recorded, and the third year in a row that the total has exceeded 100,000.

The surge in student homelessness comes at a time when the city's overall homeless population is also at record levels, exposing the utter fraud of "progressive" mayor Democrat Bill de Blasio's pledges to address the critical lack of affordable housing.

The report, prepared by Advocates for Children of New York based on data collected by the State of New York, shows the dramatic growth of youth homelessness since the start of the economic crisis a decade ago. The number of homeless students was just short of 51,000 during the 2007-08 school year, demonstrating a nearly three-fold increase over the last decade.

Homeless students include both those living in city shelters, approximately 38,000 in 2017, and those temporarily living "doubled up" with relatives or friends. According to the city, so far this year the number of families with children living in shelters is over 40,000. Another 5,600 were staying in cars, parks, campgrounds, trailers or abandoned buildings.

The situation has continued to worsen during de Blasio's five years in office. Between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, the homeless student population grew by nearly 3,100, a 3 percent increase in a single year.

The problem is especially severe in 144 of the city's 1,800 public schools, where a third of the students are homeless. The homeless student population is

concentrated in the city's poorer neighborhoods: most especially the Bronx (nearly 40,000), but also northern Manhattan, and sections of Brooklyn and Queens.

The impact of homelessness on these young people is demonstrable.

Students living in shelters tend to have a significant number of absences, averaging 30 days in 2017-18. Due to the distance between shelters and schools, some students have substantial commutes, adding to stress and loss of time. The city's band aid solution is to move some families to shelters closer to their children's schools. So far, only 200 have been relocated.

Statistics indicate that homelessness has a severe impact on academic performance. Only 12 percent of students living in shelters passed the state math exam, and only 15 percent passed the English exam in 2015-16. They are also less likely to graduate high school on time.

Support services for homeless students are meager. There is one social worker for every 1,660 students. More than 100 schools with at least 50 homeless students have no dedicated social worker focused on their needs. The precariousness of even these services is reflected in that funding for all such services is not secure, but subject to the vagaries of the city's annual budget process.

The negative effects of homelessness on young people will have consequences throughout their lives.

In one of the richest cities in the world, the fact that 150,000 children have no permanent home represents a criminal indictment of the capitalist system. The token and ineffective efforts by the de Blasio administration to address the problem only highlight the immense and growing level of economic inequality that exists in New York and the fact that the city's ultra-wealthy

financial and corporate elite are totally indifferent to its working population. Only a worker's government implementing a socialist program will be able to address the twin problems of poverty and homelessness.



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