

Crisis on the Coast

The Bay Coastal Foster Youth
and Homeless Student Populations

Hannah Melnicoe
November 2018



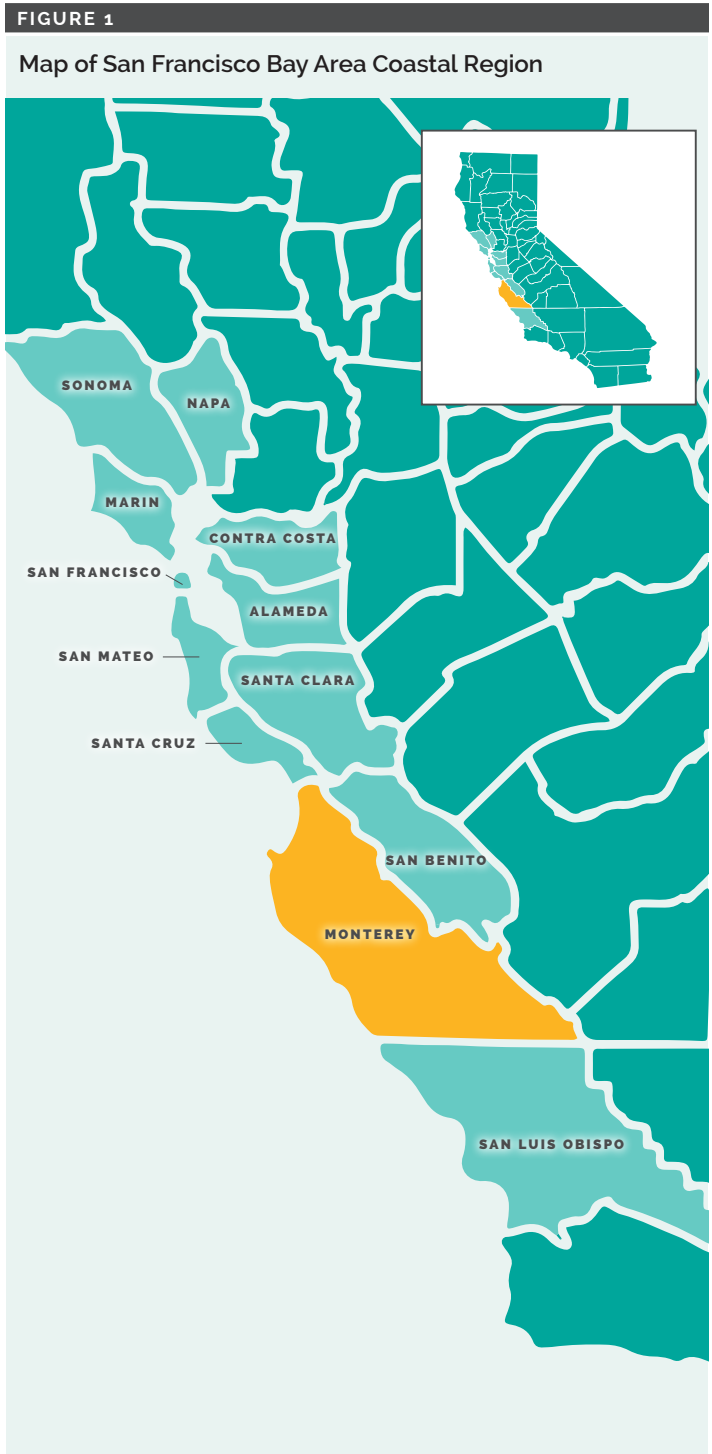
Every day, we see the face of homelessness in the Larger San Francisco Bay Area. From elderly people living in tents beneath highways to young mothers asking for money outside BART stations—these images are a constant reminder of the human cost of living in one of the most expensive places in America.

The impact on children and families is less visible. As housing prices and rents increase, working and middle-class families face increasingly tenuous housing situations. Some families are forced into homeless shelters, others crowd into converted garages with other families, and many others transition from one home to another on a monthly or even weekly basis.

It's not surprising that young children and adolescents caught in this cycle of homelessness and housing insecurity have challenges in school and suffer poor educational outcomes. Frequently, schools and local community agencies do not have adequate resources to provide and coordinate timely academic and social-emotional supports to the thousands of students lacking stable housing. These issues are especially severe in rural, inland, and isolated regions, far away from coastal urban centers where government services and non-profits are concentrated. These regions are becoming the new epicenters for young people who are homeless or in foster care, as well as other high-need student populations whose families have been priced out of the increasingly expensive coastal cities.

To address these challenges, Pivot Learning and FosterEd are collaborating to build a Single System of Support for homeless and foster youth in the northern California County of Monterey and the Antelope Valley region of northern Los Angeles County. We are working with Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, Lancaster School District, and their partner community agencies to design, fund, and implement educational and social-emotional support systems for high-need students, with a focus on foster and homeless youth.

In alignment with this work, we have partnered with Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) on research to document and expose the conditions facing youth in these high-need regions. Pivot Learning and PACE released "Over the Hill and Out of Sight," a paper on the Antelope Valley which exposed the shockingly high number of foster youth in Antelope Valley districts, resulting from the high cost of housing in urban Los Angeles. This brief focuses on the distribution of the homeless and foster youth student populations in the Bay Coastal region, an area from Sonoma County to San Luis Obispo County, with a focus on Monterey County (See Figure 1).



Two compelling findings are clear from this research. First, homelessness is not just an urban issue. Second, there are more homeless students in Monterey County than in urban counties, including San Francisco and Alameda.

Where are the Bay Coastal Homeless and Foster Youth Student Populations?

Figure 2 presents the distribution of the homeless and foster youth student populations in the Bay Coastal region. The homeless student count is taken once a year, though it can be updated throughout the school year.¹ The tally of students

in foster care represents those who entered the foster care system throughout the school year, rather than counting a single point in time.²

Public perception and the media portray homelessness as a largely urban or suburban issue. In contrast, the homeless youth population is distributed throughout the larger Bay Coastal area, including coastal Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Cruz counties. The percentage of homeless student enrollment ranges from 0.9% in Contra Costa County to 9.9% in Monterey County. The total number of homeless students ranges from 286 students in San Benito County to 7,686 in Monterey County. The total number of homeless students in Monterey County is more than triple that of highly urban San Francisco.

FIGURE 2

Distribution of Bay Coastal Homeless and Foster Youth Student Populations

County	Homeless Youth in Schools ³		Foster Youth in Schools ⁴		Total Enrollment ⁵
	#	%	#	%	
Monterey	7,686	9.9%	375	0.5%	77,517
Santa Cruz	3,028	7.5%	297	0.7%	40,462
San Luis Obispo	2,556	7.3%	419	1.2%	34,792
San Francisco	2,075	3.4%	783	1.3%	60,748
Marin	918	2.7%	186	0.6%	33,633
San Benito	286	2.6%	91	0.8%	11,164
San Mateo	2,015	2.1%	362	0.4%	95,620
Napa	310	1.5%	161	0.8%	20,562
Alameda	3,155	1.4%	1,255	0.6%	226,904
Sonoma	839	1.2%	646	0.9%	70,940
Santa Clara	2,963	1.1%	1,193	0.4%	273,264
Contra Costa	1,618	0.9%	1,259	0.7%	177,370
Total	27,449	2.4%	7,027	0.6%	1,122,976

¹The California Department of Education publicly releases the results of this October count each year through DataQuest. Analysis of 2016-17 numbers revealed that the publicly-released numbers for Monterey County's Salinas City Elementary School District appeared to be a significant undercount. When asked about the discrepancy, the district's Homeless Liaison shared the end-of-year count, as compiled by the Monterey County Office of Education. MCOE identified an additional 1,415 homeless students. As a result, this report includes the end-of-year numbers throughout this report for this district and this district alone. All other district and county-wide numbers are from DataQuest. All tables and charts that include school-level analysis, race/ethnicity analysis, and English Learner status analysis are from the publicly-released DataQuest reports.

²"Glossary of Terms for Foster Reports." California Department of Education Data Reporting Office. Retrieved from <https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/foster/FsGlossary.aspx> (July 2018).

³County Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018). "2016-17 Monterey County Homeless Student Count." Monterey County Office of Education, Student Services."

⁴County Count of Matched Foster Students, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018). Note that this is a cumulative count.

⁵County Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018).

The Crisis in Monterey

Figure 3 presents Monterey County's homeless rates in comparison to its neighbors in the region. Over 7,000 students in the county are homeless for an overall rate of 9.9%.⁶

Many homeless families in Monterey County are doubled-up with other families.⁷ In order to be considered "doubled-up," families must be sharing housing due to either the loss of their own housing or economic hardship.⁸

Some schools in the county have exceptionally high rates of homelessness. Over a third of the 930 students at Sherwood Elementary in Salinas do not have stable housing. A total of twelve schools in the county have homeless rates of 20% or more.⁹ These twelve schools serve a total of 2,069 homeless students (see Figure 4).¹⁰

FIGURE 3

In Monterey County schools, nearly one-in-ten students are homeless.¹¹

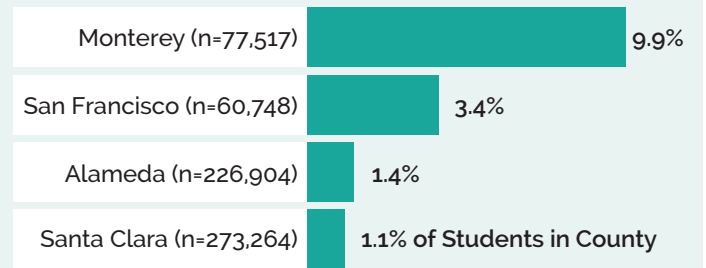
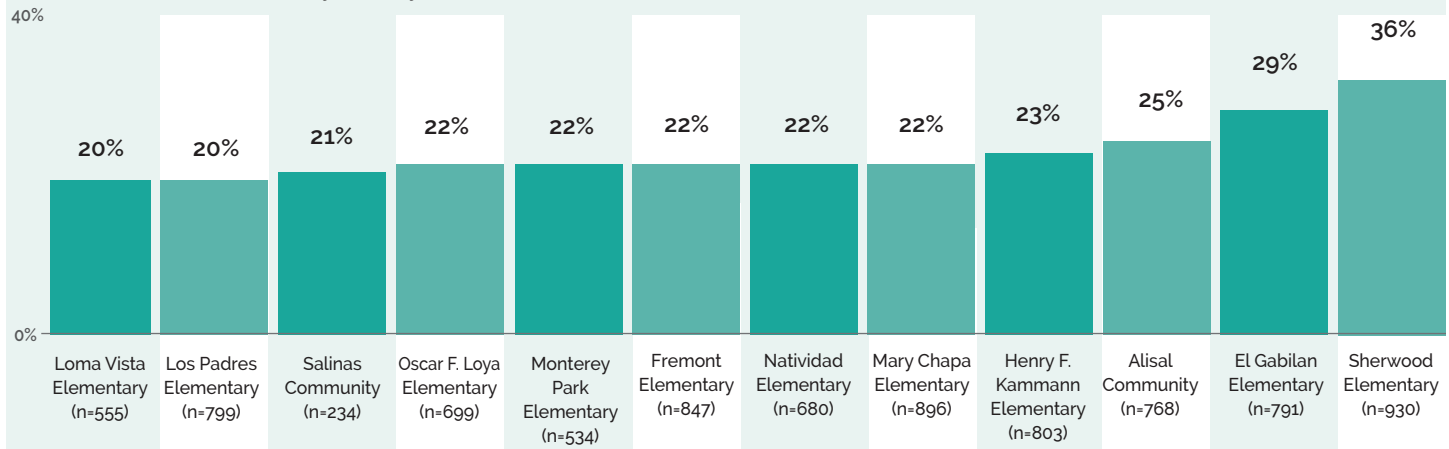


FIGURE 4

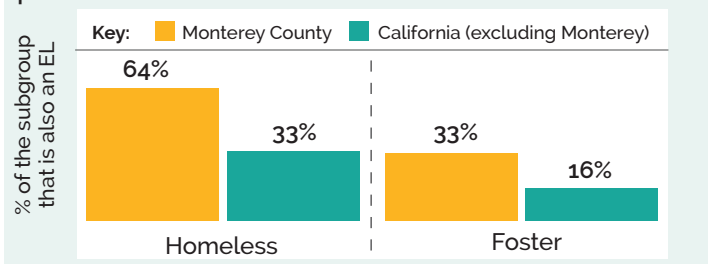
Twelve schools in Monterey County have homeless rates of 20% or more.¹²



The majority of homeless students in Monterey County are Latino—90% are Latino and 4% are white. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of foster youth in Monterey County are Latino, and an additional 15% are white. Two-thirds of homeless students are English learners. This rate is even higher at Greenfield Union Elementary, Soledad Unified, Alisal Union, and King City Union school districts where between 74% and 82% of homeless students are English learners. This is much higher than the overall rate for California, where 33% of homeless students are English learners.¹³ Similarly, nearly a third of foster youth in Monterey County are classified as English learners, double the statewide average (see Figure 5).¹⁴

FIGURE 5

Both homeless and foster students in Monterey are much more likely to be English Learners (ELs) than their peers statewide.¹⁵



⁶ Information is not publicly available about students who are both homeless and involved with the foster care system.

⁷ "2016-17 Monterey County Homeless Student Count." Monterey County Office of Education, Student Services.

⁸ "Identifying Homeless Students in Doubled Up Situations." Denver Public Schools. Retrieved from <https://www2.dpsk12.org/manila/programs/eopDeterminingeligibilityforDoubledUpfamilieshelpsheet.pdf> (June 2018).

⁹ Three schools with student bodies of fewer than 10 students were excluded from this analysis.

¹⁰ CALPADS UPC Source File 2016-17 Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (May 2018).

¹¹ County Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018). "2016-17 Monterey County Homeless Student Count." Monterey County Office of Education, Student Services."

¹² County Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018). Given that Salinas City Elementary School District's publicly-available school-level data was missing 1,415 homeless students, it is likely that school-level counts are undercounts in this district.

¹³ Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018).

¹⁴ County Count of Matched Foster Students, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018).

¹⁵ County Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018). County Count of Matched Foster Students, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018)

Homelessness in Monterey County

In Monterey County, housing is becoming increasingly expensive, reflecting the stark income inequality of the region. The unincorporated community of Pebble Beach is one of the most expensive regions in the nation, with a median home sale price of \$3.1 million dollars.¹⁶ This community is only a thirty-minute drive away from Sherwood Elementary in Salinas, where 36% of students are homeless.¹⁷

Homelessness is rising in the county. From 2015 to 2017, the overall homeless count increased by 23%.¹⁸ In Salinas, the largest and historically most affordable city in the region, this count increased by almost 60%.¹⁹ In response to a county-wide survey, two-thirds of respondents said they were homeless because they "couldn't afford rent".²⁰

As housing costs increase, affordable rental units have become harder to find. From 2016 to 2017, rents in Salinas increased by 9%, one of the largest hikes in California.²¹ The county estimates that it will need to add 7,500 affordable housing units before 2023 to meet demand, but only 200 such units are currently available.²² In response, the county has approved a temporary shelter as well as a safe parking program, allowing homeless residents to park overnight in a lot outside a county supervisor's office.²³

The crisis is exacerbated by low wages. In 2017, the median rent for a two-bedroom unit in Salinas was \$1,580.²⁴ While this may seem affordable in San Francisco or San Jose, it is beyond the means of many low-income families in Monterey County. To afford a market-rate two-bedroom apartment, a worker would need to earn \$27.56 per hour.²⁵ Nearly a third of the population of Monterey County works in agriculture or in food service, earning a median wage of \$11.64 or \$13.74 per hour, respectively.²⁶ To afford a typical apartment, an adult with children would have to have the equivalent of two full-time jobs. As a result, multiple families often live together in single-family homes.²⁷

Jessica and Daniel's Story²⁸

Jessica and her ten-year-old son Daniel have lived in Salinas for five years. They moved from Reno, Nevada to Monterey to pick strawberries. Jessica lost her job last year. Her son has a serious disability and while his teacher was fond of him, his outbursts were too much even in a special education classroom. The frequent calls from Daniel's school meant that she had to leave work to pick him up. Without steady income, Jessica fell behind on rent, and was evicted. For weeks, Jessica and Daniel spent the night in parks and public buses. They eventually found temporary housing with a family friend.



¹⁶ Schmalz, D. (2017, November 30). "Four Monterey County ZIP codes are among the nation's most expensive." Monterey County Weekly. Retrieved from http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/blogs/news_blog/four-monterey-county-zip-codes-are-among-the-nation-s/article_c0688270-d5fc-11e7-g9fd-gf3ba7efc8aa.html (April 2018)

¹⁷ CALPADS UPC Source File 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (May 2018).

¹⁸ Applied Survey Research. (2017). "Monterey County Homeless Census & Survey 2017: Executive Summary." Retrieved from <http://www.chspmontereycounty.org/wp-content/themes/chsp/img/2017-Monterey-County-Executive-Summary-Report.pdf> (April 2018).

¹⁹ Wu, A. (2017, June 23). "Homelessness Soars with 57% increase in Salinas." The Californian. Retrieved from <https://www.thecalifornian.com/story/news/2017/06/24/homelessness-soars-57-increase-salinas/425554001/> (April 2018).

²⁰ "Monterey County Homeless Census & Survey 2017: Executive Summary."

²¹ Herrera, J. (2017, February 3). "Salinas rents rise 9% over last year, Monterey's decrease 17%." Monterey Herald. Retrieved from <http://www.montereyherald.com/article/NF/20170203/NEWS/170209915> (April 2017).

²² Conrad, C. (2017, September 29). "Monterey County leaders hopeful governor's legislation will help with housing crisis." KSBW8. Retrieved from <http://www.ksbw.com/article/monterey-county-leaders-hopeful-governors-legislation-will-help-with-housing-crisis/12663538> (April 2018).

²³ Argueza, M. (2017, November 23). "With the county's homeless population on the rise, permanent solutions remain elusive." Monterey County Weekly. Retrieved from http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/news/local_news/with-the-county-s-homeless-population-on-the-rise-permanent/article_41fc690c-cf20-11e7-9a6f-c72c0247da80.html (April 2018).

²⁴ Herrera (2017).

²⁵ Out of Reach 2018: California. National Low Income Housing Coalition. Retrieved from <http://nlihc.org/oor/california> (September 2018).

²⁶ County of Monterey Recommended Budget 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=26024> (April 2018).

²⁷ Interview with Monterey Peninsula Unified School District Homeless Liaison.

²⁸ Note: This is not the story of one individual. It is a composite developed with the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District Homeless Liaison.

Foster Care in Monterey County

More children are entering the foster care system in Monterey County.²⁹ In Monterey County, the rate of children in foster care has nearly doubled from 2011 to 2015, from 2.0 children in care per 1,000 to 3.6. The high cost of living in the region has also meant that the County Department of Social Services has struggled to find foster families who have both the space for children and the time to complete the requirements to become a caregiver.³⁰

While the cause for these increases has not yet been identified, unstably housed parents are more likely to see their children become involved with the foster care system. National studies have shown that homelessness is a strong predictor of child welfare involvement (even when accounting for income).³¹

Funding and Services to Support Homeless and Foster Youth Students

The Local Control Funding Formula allocates funding based on the unduplicated number of low-income students, foster students, and English learners. However, the state does not allocate extra resources for students like those in Monterey County, who are more likely to fall into multiple categories than students in the state overall.

In general, Monterey County schools that serve more homeless students receive less per pupil. This may be because school districts with a higher concentration of low-income

students tend to be found in areas with a smaller tax base, and therefore generate less local tax money for schools. The table on the following page illustrates the per pupil spending and rate of student homelessness for the thirteen largest districts in Monterey County.

Isabella's Story³⁶

Isabella is a bright, engaged sixth grader, so her teacher wondered why this curious student had fallen so far behind on homework. Her teacher mentioned Isabella's name to the school's homeless liaison, who learned that Isabella lived in a small tent with her two younger brothers and father. Her father was hesitant to accept any additional services from the school, and the homeless liaison suspected that he might be undocumented. Isabella's teacher found a quiet space on campus where she could complete homework after school, and the family continued living in a tent.



Key Funding Sources

- **Local Control Funding Formula:** State funds are distributed to school districts based on the number and concentration of students who meet income requirements to receive a free or reduced-price meal (FRPM), foster students, and English learners.³²
- **Title I:** Districts that receive Title I funds from the federal government must reserve some funds for homeless students, but the size of the set-aside is not mandated.³³
- **McKinney-Vento:** School districts can apply for McKinney-Vento funds, which are dispersed through a competitive grant program via the federal government every three years.³⁴
- **Foster Youth Services Coordinating (FYSC) Program:** This state-level grant is meant to help students in foster care meet their academic, social-emotional, and health needs.³⁵

²⁹Children in Foster Care. KidsData.Org. Retrieved from <http://www.kidsdata.org/topic/20/fostercare/trend#fmt-2493&loc-2&tf-1.84> (March 2018).

³⁰Miraglio, S (2017, November 29). "Adoption is up in Monterey County, but so is the number of foster kids." KION 5/46 News Channel. Retrieved from <http://www.kion546.com/news/adoption-is-up-in-monterey-county-but-so-is-the-number-of-foster-kids/663981470> (April 2018).

³¹Cowal, K. et al (2002, Oct). "Mother-child separations among homeless and housed families receiving public assistance in New York City." Am J Community Psychol. 30(5):711-30.

³²"LCFF Frequently Asked Questions." California Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/lcffaqa.asp> (July 2018).

³³Interview with Leanne Wheeler, California Department of Education.

³⁴Email from Leanne Wheeler, California Department of Education.

³⁵Foster Youth Services. California Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/> (April 2018).

³⁶Note: This is not the story of one individual. It is a composite developed with the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District Homeless Liaison.

FIGURE 6

In general, districts that serve more homeless students receive less funding per pupil.

District	Per Pupil Spending (16-17) ³⁷	% Homeless (16-17) ³⁸
Santa Rita Union Elementary	\$9,044	1%
Alisal Union	\$10,541	15%
King City Union	\$10,569	12%
Salinas City Elementary	\$10,700	37%
Greenfield Union Elementary	\$11,080	16%
Soledad Unified	\$11,552	2%
Salinas Union High	\$11,654	1%
South Monterey County Joint Union High	\$11,739	5%
North Monterey County Unified	\$11,865	14%
Monterey Peninsula Unified	\$12,022	9%
Gonzales Unified	\$12,226	3%
Pacific Grove Unified	\$15,074	0%
Carmel Unified	\$21,427	0%

Finally, low-income families in rural regions typically have much less access to social services than low-income families in cities.³⁹ An initial review of services and supports in Monterey County—in comparison to San Francisco—revealed wide disparities in available supports and services from government providers and community non-profits. As the population of high-need students moves out of expensive coastal areas to comparatively lower cost regions, policy-makers, non-profits, and philanthropists should consider how funding and infrastructure can move with them.

Conclusion

Each and every young person is entitled to a high-quality education. Young people who come into contact with public systems—especially those who languish in the child welfare system and who are experiencing homeless—face overwhelming barriers to getting the education they deserve. The opportunity to learn has been interrupted by frequent and unnecessary home and school moves. Students are subject to conditions that are uncomfortable, unpredictable, and sometimes dangerous. Students often lack basic necessities—school supplies, reliable meals, a quiet place to do homework, and a place to sleep. Interruptions in learning are frequent, coursework is uncompleted, and many fall behind in school. Foster youth face compounding challenges, having suffered from abuse and neglect and the trauma of being removed from their families. The data substantiating these lived experiences is stark and reveals an alarming achievement gap for system involved youth, including chronic school absence and school mobility.

The stark rise in student homelessness is overwhelming communities, service agencies, schools, and families who struggle to meet students' growing needs. This crisis should provoke attention and action from government, philanthropy, and the non-profit community. Deep dive strategies that blend together practice, research, policy, cross-sector collaboration, and infrastructure-building in regions such as Monterey must emerge if we are to realize a more promising future for this vulnerable group of young people.

³⁷ Current Expense of Education. California Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/fd/ec/currentexpense.asp> (June 2018).

³⁸ County Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, 2016-17. Retrieved from California Department of Education, DataQuest (June 2018). "2016-17 Monterey County Homeless Student Count." Monterey County Office of Education, Student Services.

³⁹ Murphy, A. and Wallace, D. (2010). "Opportunities for making ends meet and upward mobility: differences in organizational deprivation across urban and suburban poor neighborhoods." *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(5):1164-186.

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without contributions from:

- Cheryl Camany, Salinas City Elementary School District
- Carlos Diaz, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
- Donnie Everett, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
- Yali Lincroft, Walter S. Johnson Foundation
- Leanne Wheeler, California Department of Education
- Jackie Wong, California Department of Education

This report was generously supported by the Stuart Foundation.

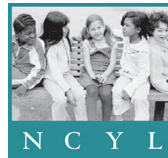
STUART FOUNDATION

IMPROVING LIFE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH EDUCATION



Founded in 1995, Pivot Learning is a nonprofit organization of K-12 education experts who work directly with districts and charters to address their biggest challenges, including raising student achievement and closing unconscionably large achievement gaps. Pivot's mission is to revitalize our public school systems so that all students have the opportunity to succeed in college and career. We partner with education leaders at all levels of the system — including superintendents, mid-level district leaders, principals, teachers and community members — to provide the knowledge, skills and support proven to strengthen educational systems and transform teaching and learning.

Pivot Learning
500 12th Street, Suite 350
Oakland, CA 94607
510.250.2543
info@pivotlearning.org



The National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) has worked for more than four decades to improve the lives of marginalized children and youth. NCYL leads campaigns, weaving together research, public awareness, policy development, technical assistance and litigation to ensure governmental systems provide the support these children and youth need to thrive.

National Center for Youth Law
405 14th Street, 15th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
info@foster-ed.org

