Family Homelessness and Libraries

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Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with humility and respect that I begin with a land acknowledgement. Let us all take a moment to pause, reflect, and recognize that we are gathered on the sacred and unceded homelands of many indigenous nations. Let us acknowledge the genocide and continued displacement of indigenous peoples.

New York City, where I live and work, is the ancestral home of the Lenape Peoples. I honor and pay respect to their ancestors and to future generations.

Objectives

Following this session, you will:

- have a basic understanding of family homelessness in the United States;
- know how to identify and contact the McKinney-Vento liaison in your local school district;
- understand the challenges faced by children experiencing homelessness;
- identify policy and other barriers to serving families in homeless situations and how to address them;
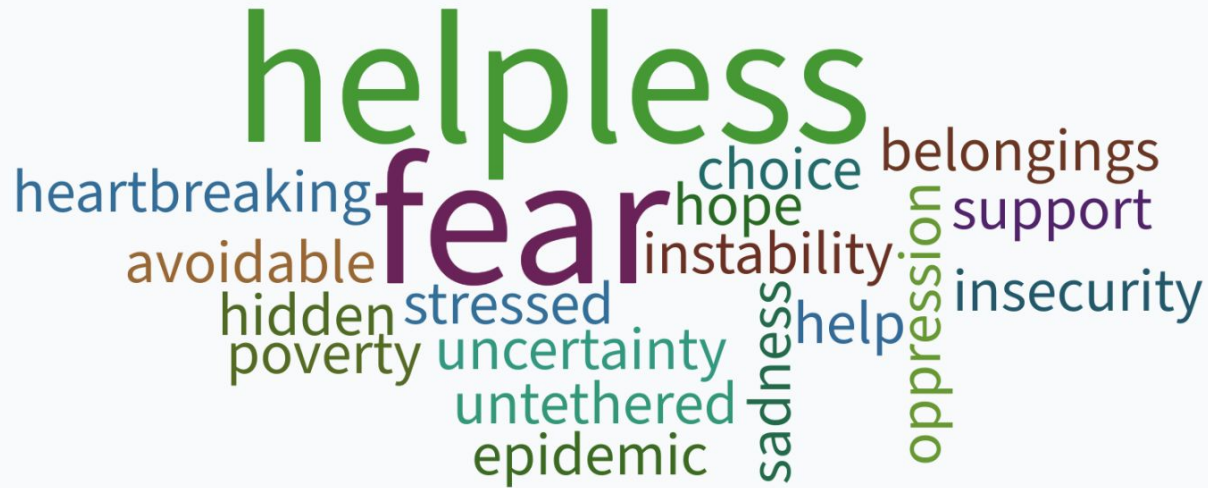- gain ideas for initial library service activities with shelters and other service providers.

A little bit about us...

Family Homelessness

When I think about homelessness, the first word that comes to mind is…

helpless
fear
heartbreaking
choice
belongings
hope
support
avoidable
instability
oppression
insecurity
hidden
stressed
help
poverty
uncertainty
sadness
untethered
epidemic

Causes of Family Homelessness

- Generally structural/systemic
  - Unemployment/underemployment
  - Low wages/wage stagnation
  - Lack of affordable housing

- Typically episodic not chronic

- Domestic violence and/or histories of trauma

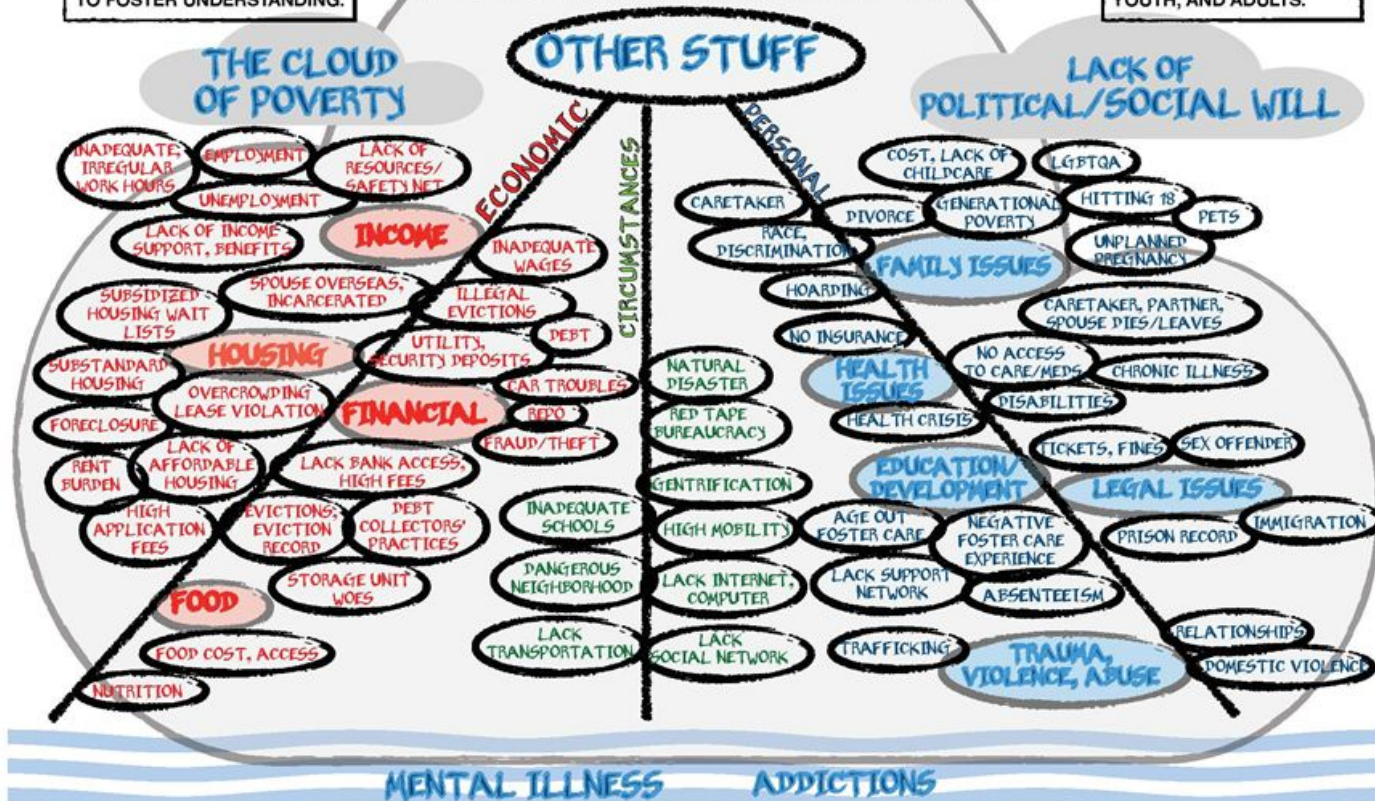# Economic factors that lead to poverty and homelessness also impact libraries

- Government austerity budgets
- Funding tied to private homeownership (property taxes)
- Library workers may also experience homelessness or housing deprivation

"Other Stuff" diagram created by Diane Nilan, HEAR US Inc. www.hearus.us

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EXHIBIT 3.13: Demographic Characteristics of Homeless People in Families with Children
By CoC Category, 2019

	Major City CoCs (n=48)	Other Largely Urban CoCs (n=60)	Largely Suburban CoCs (n=170)	Largely Rural CoCs (n=114)
Number of People	87,720	8,885	43,065	29,805
Age				
Under 18	59.5%	63.0%	60.9%	60.3%
18 to 24	8.2%	6.3%	6.5%	5.7%
Over 24	32.4%	30.7%	32.7%	34.1%
Gender				
Female	60.8%	62.4%	60.9%	60.5%
Male	39.1%	37.5%	39.0%	39.4%
Transgender	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Gender Non-conforming	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic/Latino	65.2%	82.2%	72.9%	83.1%
Hispanic/Latino	34.8%	17.8%	27.1%	16.9%
Race				
White	22.7%	37.2%	42.3%	62.8%
Black	68.2%	48.5%	43.8%	21.1%
Asian	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.6%
Native American	1.3%	3.0%	1.4%	5.5%
Pacific Islander	1.0%	1.3%	2.7%	1.4%
Multiple Races	5.8%	9.0%	8.8%	8.6%

Source: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

Recent Trends/Concerns

- According to HUD, in 2020, for the first time, more people were unsheltered than sheltered, and the number of unsheltered families with children increased.
- According to the National Education Association, LEAs lost contact with 3 million students during the pandemic.
- Eviction moratoriums have expired or are expiring, renter/homeowner assistance hasn't reached everyone (confusing, cumbersome, complicated).
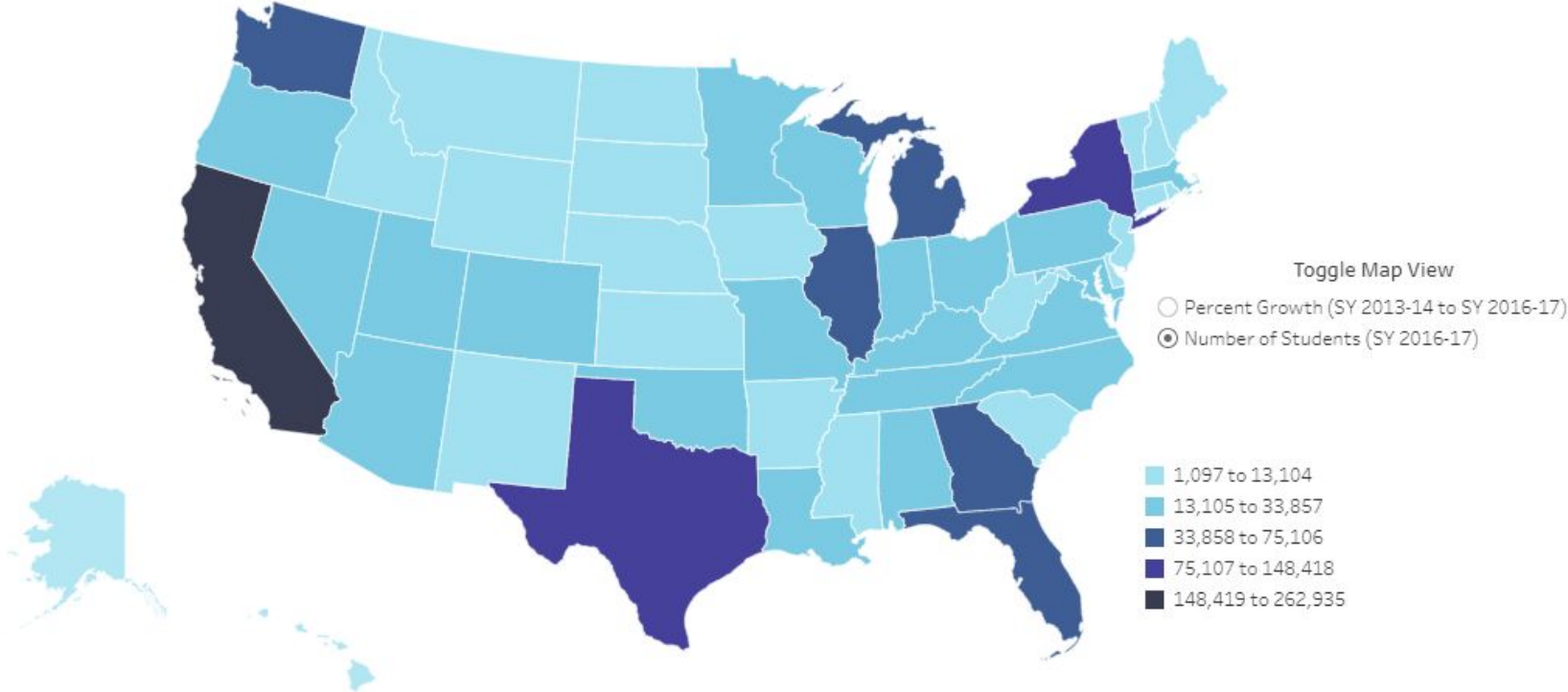
Family Homelessness in the U.S.

- One in 30 American children experience homelessness each year.
- 51% are under age five.
- 84% of families experiencing homelessness are female-headed.
- More than 90% of homeless mothers report they had been physically and/or sexually abused over their lifetimes.***
- The 2.3 to 3.5 million single adults who experience homelessness annually are also part of families.

Many parents have experienced trauma throughout their lives before they experience homelessness, AND the experience(s) of homelessness creates additional trauma for parents and for children.

Source: _The Bassuk Center on Homeless and Vulnerable Children & Youth_

Homeless Students P-12 (2016-2017)

Toggle Map View

○ Percent Growth (SY 2013-14 to SY 2016-17)
◉ Number of Students (SY 2016-17)

■ 1,097 to 13,104
■ 13,105 to 33,857
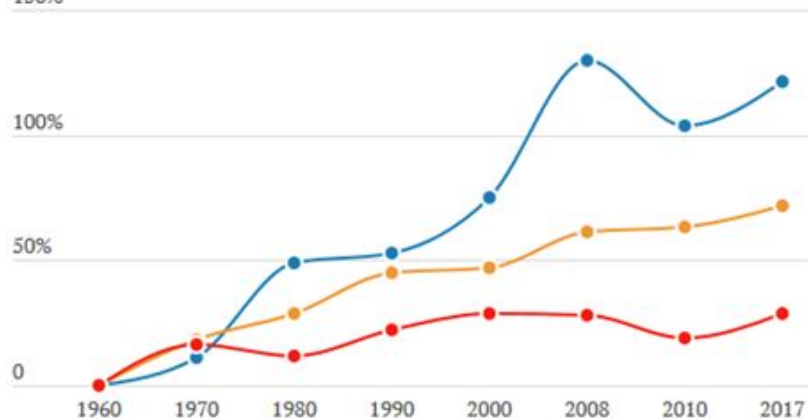■ 33,858 to 75,106
■ 75,107 to 148,418
■ 148,419 to 262,935

Housing Costs vs. Wage Growth

US Nationwide:

- Median House Price
- Median Gross Rent per Month
- Median Household Income

Growth rate:
150%

100%

50%

0

1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2008 2010 2017

From: https://listwithclever.com/research/home-price-v-income-historical-study/

Living Wage vs. Minimum Wage

MIT Living Wage Calculator: https://livingwage.mit.edu/

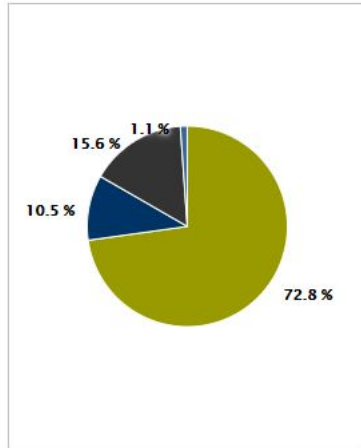|	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)			
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage	$21.77	$38.35	$47.17	$60.92	$30.20	$34.97	$38.86	$43.14	$15.10	$20.63	$25.52	$30.71
Poverty Wage	$6.13	$8.29	$10.44	$12.60	$8.29	$10.44	$12.60	$14.75	$4.14	$5.22	$6.30	$7.38
Minimum Wage	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80	$11.80

NYC's minimum wage is $15.00
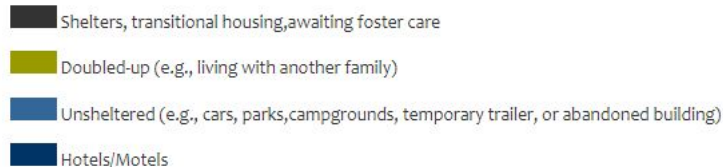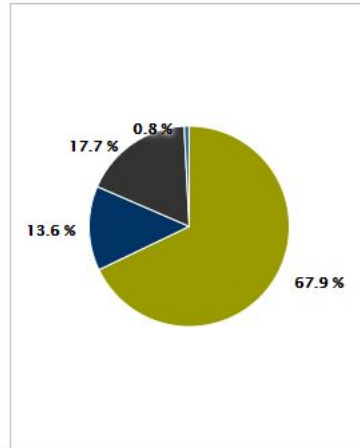
Where School-Age Children in Homeless Situations Sleep

SY 2016–2017 / SY 2017–2018 / SY 2018–2019

Legend:
- Shelters, transitional housing, awaiting foster care
- Doubled-up (e.g., living with another family)
- Unsheltered (e.g., cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailer, or abandoned building)
- Hotels/Motels
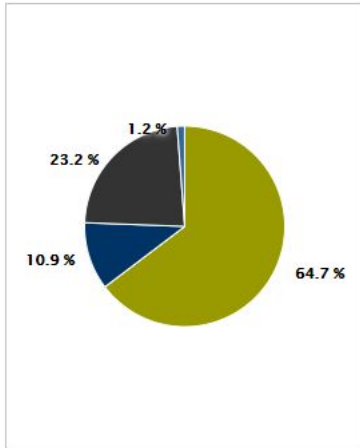
❖ Ralph da Costa Nunez argues in *A Shelter is Not a Home...Or Is It?* (2010) that the lack of commitment to low-income or affordable housing in the United States has created a situation where for many young children "for the duration of their childhoods, a shelter may be their only home" (p. 1).

❖ These circumstances are sociopolitical as well as being socioeconomic; thus, our collective discomfort of viewing shelters, overcrowded apartments, trailers, motels, or campgrounds as "home" yields to the reality that they are, for millions of children.

HUD

Collects data from Continuums of Care; annual Point-in-Time Count; has a more narrow definition of "homeless"

USDE/LEAs

Uses McKinney-Vento definition; includes "doubled-up," "couch-surfing," and unaccompanied youth

McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act) defines *homeless* **as follows:**

The term "homeless children and youths"--

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes--

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;*

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

*Per Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act, "awaiting foster care placement" was removed from the definition of homeless on December 10, 2016; the only exception to his removal is that "covered states" have until December 10, 2017 to remove "awaiting foster care placement" from their definition of homeless.

McKinney-Vento Liaisons

- MKV liaisons will know EVERYTHING about family homelessness in your community
  - Counting "doubled-up" and unsheltered students
  - Connecting to outside organizations

- Multiple roles, underfunded, under-resourced

- Major Responsibilities
  - Work with families to enroll/provide access
  - Build connections to local schools
  - Work to raise awareness across the community and the nation
  - Set community goals and use data to drive progress

McKinney-Vento Student Protections

Students in homeless situations are entitled to
- Enroll immediately even if they don't have required documents
- Remain in their school of origin if that is in the child's best interest
- Transportation to the school of origin (if outside the LEA)
- Free school meals
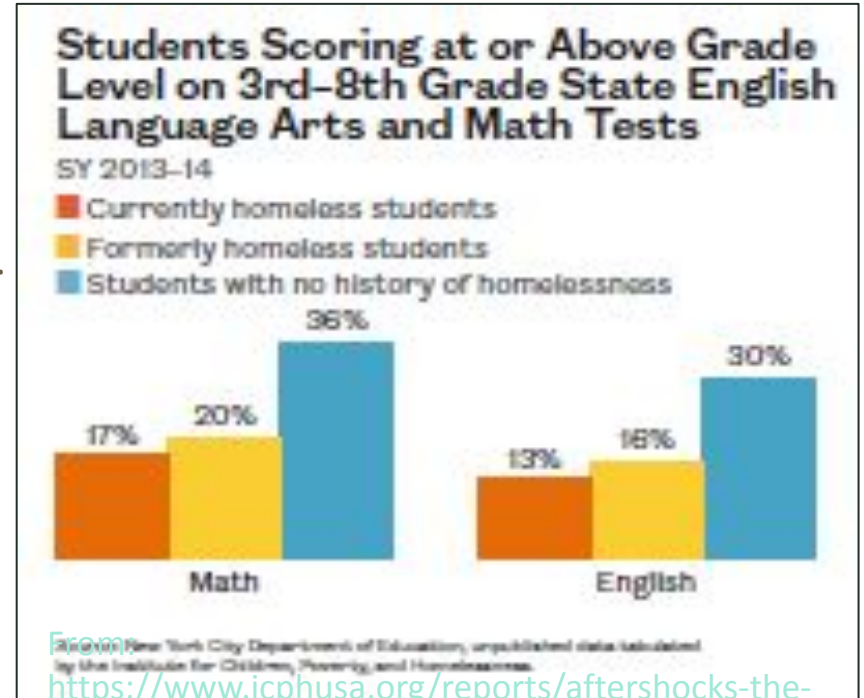- Financial support for school-related costs (club and uniform fees, etc.)

Finding Your Local McKinney-Vento Liaison

- Search your state + department of education + homeless
  - Required to list all McKinney-Vento liaisons (but may be hidden/hard to find!)
  - VERY high turnover
  - May also have some statistics on students experiencing homelessness
- Visit your LEA website and search for "McKinney-Vento" or "homeless"

www.google.com

Impacts of Childhood Homelessness on Education

- Homelessness in early childhood is associated with delays in children's language, literacy, and social-emotional development.

- Twenty months after staying in an emergency shelter, children scored worse in pre-reading skills compared to national averages for children their age.

- Only 21.5% of homeless elementary students are proficient in math and only 24.4% in reading.

- Only 11.4% of homeless high school students are proficient in math and only 14.6% in reading.

- 16% of students experiencing homelessness receive special education services

- Students experiencing homelessness are both OVER-represented in special education and UNDER-serviced by special education

Students Scoring at or Above Grade Level on 3rd–8th Grade State English Language Arts and Math Tests

SY 2013–14

- Currently homeless students
- Formerly homeless students
- Students with no history of homelessness

Math: 17%, 20%, 36%
English: 13%, 16%, 30%

From New York City Department of Education, unpublished data tabulated by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness.

From

https://www.icphusa.org/reports/aftershocks-the-lasting-impact-of-homelessness-on-student-achievement/

The Role of Libraries

Library Policies and Barriers

Library Cards
Proof of address/residency = barriers
Growing trend toward open access

Fees/Fines
Fears of "the library police"/reality of collections
Many libraries going fine-free

Access
Lack of transportation/limited hours
Policies around bags, hygiene, sleeping may be enforced selectively

What Libraries Can Do & Offer

LEARN

PARTNER

ADVOCATE

TECHNOLOGY

PROGRAMMING

FOOD

Outreach

PROS

- Meets people where they are
- Overcomes barriers to access
- Can be specialized/targeted
- Makes connections that can have long-term impact
- Requires time, effort, and relationships

CONS

- Doesn't necessarily CHANGE systemic failings/barriers
- Often dependent on one person's commitment
- May not be considered as important as other library work
- Requires time, effort and relationships

Sample Programming
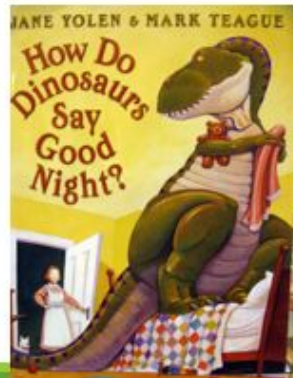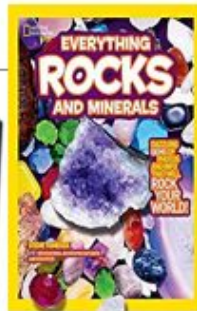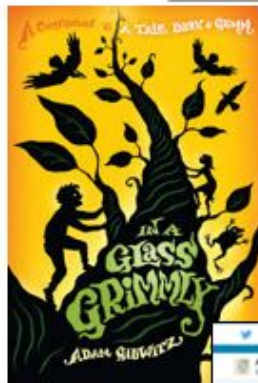
Next Steps?

Resources

Schoolhouse Connection

https://schoolhouseconnection.org/

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

https://nche.ed.gov/

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)

https://naehcy.org/

Diane Nilan's HEAR US

https://www.hearus.us/

Eviction Lab at Princeton University

https://evictionlab.org/

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