

Students Experiencing Homelessness: A Conditional Cash Transfer Pilot



2020-2021

Executive Summary

Inadequate Housing in Children Leads to Poor Life Outcomes

Having inadequate housing has been repeatedly correlated in research with detrimental effects on a child's ability to meet their full potential while attending school.¹ Furthermore, not completing high school is the single biggest risk factor for a young person experiencing homelessness.²

The corollary is also borne out in data. There is ample research showing that when families are able to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, and medical care, parents and caregivers in turn experience less stress, and are better prepared to provide their children the support required for them to grow into healthy, productive adults.³

The following questions motivated the design and implementation of the "Students Experiencing Homelessness: A Conditional Cash Transfer Pilot" (CCT pilot) in Cuba and West Las Vegas, New Mexico during the 2020-2021 school year:

- **Can monetary incentives to inadequately housed students increase engagement in school, tutoring and emotional support offerings?**
- **Does that engagement improve their short-term academic outcomes and social-emotional wellbeing?**
- **How do you design a pilot and evaluation tools focused on traditionally marginalized, traumatized and rural populations?**
- **Is it ethical to attach a condition to receive money in the context where the recipients lack the resources to meet their basic needs?**

In partnership with the LANL Foundation (LANLF), Cuba Independent School District (CISD), and West Las Vegas School District (WLVSD), New Mexico Appleseed designed, implemented and evaluated this intervention to provide educational and financial support to inadequately housed students. In light of the challenges even stably housed students faced during the 2020-2021 remote school year due to COVID-19, the barriers unstably housed students experienced to academic success and social-emotional wellbeing were likely even greater.⁴

¹ New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, (September 16, 2019) 2015 NM-YRRS Results: Housing Instability Among Youth. Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (December 18, 2019), Disparities in Academic Achievement, <https://www.icphusa.org/reports/disparities-in-academic-achievement/>.

² Hall and Voices of Youth Count, Research to Impact Brief, Missed Opportunities: Education Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in American (November 2019), <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/missed-opportunities-education-among-youth-experiencing-homelessness-in-america/>.

³ Carrie Masten, Joan Lombardi, And Philip Fisher, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Helping Families Meet Basic Needs Enables Parents to Promote Children's Healthy Growth, Development (October 28, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/helping-families-meet-basic-needs-enables-parents-to-promote>. Sam Waxman, Arloc Sherman, and Kris Cox, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Income Support Associated with Improved Health Outcomes for Children, Many Studies Show (May 27, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/income-support-associated-with-improved-health-outcomes-for-children-many>.

⁴ New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, Spotlight: Status of School Reopening and Remote Education in Fall 2020 (October 28, 2020), <https://www.nmlegis.gov/Handouts/ALFC%20102820%20Item%203%20Spotlight%20-%20Status%20of%20School%20Reopening%20and%20Remote%20Education%20in%20Fall%202020....pdf>.

Participating students were inadequately housed high school students living in or around Cuba and West Las Vegas, New Mexico. Both communities are tight-knit with strong cultural supports and family connections, despite generations of poverty and racial discrimination. The communities' assets include engaged and supportive school districts that value their students. There are also challenges, almost all of which have been the result of generational racism and resulting trauma.

The CISD students are largely Native American and live in small and extremely rural communities, many of which have limited access to electricity, plumbing, or internet. WLVSd is made up of largely Hispanic students. While there is also extreme poverty in this district, students were more likely to have internet access and the community is not as rural as Cuba. Both communities struggle with lack of access to services, underfunding for education and mental health, and have few jobs that pay a living wage.

Participants received a basic needs stipend of \$500 for each month, up to eight months during the 2020-2021 school year in exchange for the completion of the following requirements:

- **Weekly 1–2-hour tutoring sessions designed to assist students with completing work and instruction in reading and math.**
- **Weekly check-ins to address social-emotional issues, academic challenges, and basic needs of students through-out the school year. These check-ins were a mix of online, over the phone and in-person, including home visits.**
- **Attend school 90% of the time.**
- **Complete 90% of their schoolwork on.**

The CCT pilot was designed to support the real-time academic, social-emotional and financial needs of inadequately housed students during the COVID-19 pandemic, while adding to the larger conversation about using cash transfers to address those same needs. **In response to the real-time participant needs and barriers to participation outside of the participants' control, New Mexico Appleseed created a "Compassionate Exception" so that students were able to receive the cash transfer even when all requirements were not met.** Both school districts' staff made extra efforts to find and support their students, at times driving at least forty-five minutes to meet students in their homes, gathering additional resources such as food and clothing, and when students disengaged, doing everything they could to reconnect and re-engage them. School staff and parents alike saw internet access as a barrier to meeting the conditions.

The CCT pilot was an observational study that involved the design process, the intervention and the evaluation. There was no control or comparison group because the nature of the locations and the context of COVID-19 were so unusual. Though the target communities and the reality of the pandemic were unique, the CCT pilot findings reveal positive outcomes for participants and generated sufficient evidence to merit further study.

The Ethical Dilemmas of a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)

Attaching a condition to receive basic needs money is fraught with ethical issues, most of which are rooted in power imbalances and racial inequity. The ethical argument against adding a condition to a cash transfer is that human beings have an unconditional right to have their basic needs met. Conditions around education, however, may be acceptable ethically because they involve things that children already need and have to do, such as attend school. Regardless of how the money is spent by the parents, the academic benefits accrue to the child, improving school attendance and supporting with academic and emotional needs. After consulting with an ethicist and partners around the county, New Mexico Appleseed decided to retain the conditions but encouraged the use of the Compassionate Exception, discussed herein. This allowed payment to be made to students if circumstances beyond their control presented barriers to meeting all their requirements.


The ideal CCT would be created in partnership with the participants who decide that they or their children would like the incentive to perform certain activities or meet certain requirements in order to receive the cash.


Highlights of Findings


New Mexico Appleseed and partners collected qualitative and quantitative data that showed evidence sufficient to both merit further study and construct a proof of concept for legislative audiences.


CASH TRANSFER PILOT SUCCESSES


New Mexico Appleseed analyzed quantitative data and conducted over 40 exit interviews with students, families, and staff. The feedback on the pilot program was overwhelmingly positive.


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The program experienced an over **80% retention rate with the fifty-three student participants from both districts.**
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100% surveyed individuals would recommend the program. Respondents expressed a wish that the program would continue and expand to include other families.
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100% of students noted how helpful the tutoring was and some said they **would not have passed their classes if it was not for the tutoring sessions.**
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Students stated that the **money helped motivate them to focus** on school and meet their needs, such as buying clothes, shoes, or school supplies or paying phone bills.
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100% of respondents stated that the program **was helpful in paying bills such as rent and food** and that helped students focus and concentrate on school.
- 

Families spent the **money on necessities** such as car payments, utilities, home repairs and weatherization, braces, phone bills, gas, and food.
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100% of the families thought the program requirements were fair and the stipends were helpful.
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Respondents stated that the intervention helped students **be more responsible and had a positive impact on their grades.**

Program Design and Evaluation Learnings

The pilot's evaluation and design methods had both strengths and aspects that could be improved. Lessons learned include:

- **Compassionate Exception:** The creation of a 'Compassionate Exception'—New Mexico Appleseed's innovative concept—allowed for flexibility with the requirements when the reality of highly mobile and under-resourced students' lives made meeting those requirements difficult.
- **Design Team:** Create a design team prior to the intervention that includes those who meet participant qualifications or have similar lived experience. Even the school personnel cannot replace the students' perspectives when it comes to intervention design. This is particularly important when it comes to creating requirements to receive money for basic needs. Participants have a perspective that must be considered when designing an intervention like this.
- **Survey Consistency:** Promote consistency around who fills out surveys. The fact that it was unclear whether the parents, caregivers, and students filled out the surveys made results difficult to interpret.
- **Right-Sized Conditions:** Ensure that any conditions (program requirements) have a demonstrable benefit that outweighs the risk of harm stemming from mandating a condition. Cash transfers become more ethically fraught when you attach conditions because humans should have unconditional access to basic needs.
- **Evaluation Tools:** Have a thorough understanding of which evaluation tools are most effective with highly mobile, vulnerable and rural populations. Age, education levels and culture need to be taken into account when designing evaluation tools such as surveys and interviews.
- **Compensation:** Pay schools for salaried or hourly FTE(s) to oversee the program and support students in fulfilling the program requirements, including tutoring and social-emotional support. Ensuring that schools have adequate financial support to provide tutoring and social emotional support is a non-negotiable part of any program budget. The requirements on staff and teachers are too burdensome to add on to an already full-time job.
- **Ethics Expertise:** If possible, retain the services of an ethicist to help parse the ethical issues involved with conditional cash transfers and working with vulnerable populations.

Introduction

Children without safe and stable housing experience worse health, child welfare, and educational outcomes than their stably housed peers.⁵ Children who are inadequately housed, including children living in a motel or in a home without utilities, may experience higher rates of abuse and neglect, mental health challenges, and an increase in substance abuse problems than their stably housed peers.⁶ In addition, data show that children's inadequate living environments can impact academic performance and increase the risk of becoming housing unstable as adults.⁷

Inadequate housing encompasses more than living in a homeless shelter or being unhoused. It also includes (1) lack of utilities or (2) when an individual or family is forced to stay with friends or family members due to economic hardship or similar reasons, often resulting in overcrowded conditions. The latter is commonly referred to as "doubled up" and is the most common housing situation of inadequately housed students in New Mexico.⁸

The impact of a child's living environment on their academic outcomes is so profound that the United States Congress created and passed a federal law, the McKinney-Vento Act, Subtitle VII-B,⁹ (McKinney-Vento) to mitigate the educational inequities experienced by children living in housing that is everything from substandard to non-existent. This federal law was designed to help ensure that eligible children have equal access to education. McKinney-Vento requirements apply to all public-school districts and state charters and include the right of a child to immediate enrollment without documentation, free school meals, the right to stay in and have transportation to one's original school even if a family moves out of the district or zone, and fee waivers for academic and extracurricular activities.¹⁰

Although funding exists for McKinney-Vento programs in public school settings, it is very limited and may not be used for housing.¹¹ So, the law is limited to supporting inadequately housed students in their academic environments, but does not address the inadequate housing that is a causal factor of the students' academic and social-emotional challenges. Even with other federal and state support programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy

⁵ Miller, P. M. (2015). Families' experiences in different homeless and highly mobile settings: Implications for school and community practice. *Education and Urban Society*, 47, 3–34, doi:10.1177/0013124512469814. Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (December 18, 2019), Disparities in Academic Achievement, <https://www.icphusa.org/reports/disparities-in-academic-achievement/>.

⁶ New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, (September 16, 2019) 2015 NM-YRRS Results: Housing Instability Among Youth. Dworsky, A. (2014). Families at the Nexus of Housing and Child Welfare Washington, D.C.: First Focus. Retrieved from: <https://firstfocus.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Families-at-the-Nexus-of-Housing-and-Child-Welfare.pdf>.

⁷ Schoolhouse Connection Featured Research, Public Schools Report Over 1.5 Million Homeless Children and Youth – All Time Record (January 29, 2020), <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/public-schools-report-over-1-5-million-homeless-children-and-youth/>. Chapin Hall and Voices of Youth Count, Research to Impact Brief, Missed Opportunities: Education Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in American (November 2019), <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/missed-opportunities-education-among-youth-experiencing-homelessness-in-america/>.

⁸ National Center for Homeless Education at Serve, State Profile: New Mexico, <https://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/StateProfile.aspx?StateID=38>.

⁹ McKinney Vento defines housing conditions that have been shown to have a detrimental effect on a child's ability to meet their full potential while attending school as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- i. sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals.
- ii. having 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.
- iii. living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- iv. migratory who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

¹⁰ National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, the Most Frequently Asked Questions on the Education Rights of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations (October 2017), https://naehcy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017-10-16_NAEHCY-FAQs.pdf.

¹¹ National Center for Homeless Education, McKinney-Vento Subgrant Authorized Activities, <https://nche.ed.gov/mv-auth-activities/>.

Families (TANF), Medicaid, tax credits and school meals, **there is no program that provides inadequately housed families and children regular access to unrestricted money that can be used as the recipients see fit to address even a small percentage of the basic needs the recipient may lack.**¹²

Because there is no universal screening of all students' living environments, there is no definitive count of children in New Mexico without adequate housing. Data, however, strongly suggest that many lack it. Food, housing, energy and transportation and other cost burdens add up to more than many families can afford. (Appendix A.) New Mexico has a deficit of affordable and adequate housing, particularly for extremely low-income renters.¹³ From McKinney-Vento school enrollment data to the Youth Risk and Resiliency Surveys (YRRS) filled out by middle and high school students, there are enough data to show that many children in New Mexico are inadequately housed, with both data sources likely being an underestimate for many reasons, including the stigma surrounding housing instability, fear of identifying as housing unstable, and high mobility.¹⁴ New Mexico school districts identified and reported 11,588 students in pre-K to grade 12 experiencing homelessness in the 2018-2019 school year.¹⁵ Yet, estimates based on data from the 2019 YRRS suggest that 9,401 students ages 11-18 experienced homelessness, pointing to the likelihood that the pre-K to grade 12 population is much larger than reported.¹⁶

Racism as a Root Cause

New Mexico Appleseed believes that, in large part, the root cause of children's lack of access to basic needs is the result of the racial inequity that has plagued the Native American and Hispanic communities that make up much of New Mexico's population. The fingerprints of racial inequity are found in discriminatory practices embedded in everything from education to housing to regional planning.¹⁷

Existing practices and policies force people to survive in low-paying jobs while providing insufficient access to affordable healthcare, food and other basic needs.¹⁸ These inequities manifest themselves in significantly lower earnings, high generational poverty rates, and high prevalence of costly health issues, such as diabetes, frequent mental distress, and lower life expectancy.¹⁹

Cash Transfers

One proven intervention to stabilize under-resourced families while addressing poverty and housing inadequacy is to provide them with money to spend as they see fit - a tool that is distinct from the support benefits discussed above such as SNAP, where recipients can only use the benefits on certain types of food,²⁰ or TANF, which has strict eligibility requirements and multiple barriers to access.²¹

¹² There is a growing national movement to provide guaranteed income to families and individuals. For organizations working on this see <https://gicp.info/>.

¹³ National Low Income Housing Coalition, New Mexico State Data Overview, <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/new-mexico>.

¹⁴ Erin S. Ingram, John M. Bridgeland, Bruce Reed, and Matthew Atwell, Civic Enterprises and Hart Research Associates, Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America's Public Schools (June 13, 2016), <https://www.americaspromise.org/report/hidden-plain-sight>.

¹⁵ NM PED, Homeless Education Data, <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/student-success-wellness/ehcy-program/>.

¹⁶ This estimate was developed using YRRS and census data.

¹⁷ County Health Rankings, Children living in poverty even in healthiest counties, <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/children-living-in-poverty>.

¹⁸ County Health Rankings, Children living in poverty even in healthiest counties, <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/children-living-in-poverty>.

¹⁹ County Health Rankings, 2021 Measures, <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/2021-measures>.

²⁰ USDA Food and Nutrition Service, What Can SNAP Buy?, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>.

²¹ Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Policy Basics: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (March 31, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families>. Only about 20% of TANF actually goes to providing basic assistance for families in need.

Decades of global research has shown that the provision of money without restrictions on its use mitigates some of the damage done by poverty (including housing inadequacy).²² This intervention is called a “Cash Transfer.” Cash Transfers (CT) are money given to an individual or family, to be used as they see fit and research has shown both short and long-term positive results.²³

There are two types of cash transfers:

- **Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT):** Adding a condition that must be fulfilled in order to receive the cash transfer.²⁴
- **Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT):** There is no condition the recipient must fulfill to receive the cash transfer.²⁵

For CCTs, the condition theoretically motivates or nudges the participant to fulfill a beneficial condition to receive the cash transfer and the participant may derive a benefit from the condition irrespective of what the money is spent on. In general, cash transfer programs, particularly UCTs or guaranteed income programs, are gaining traction as an effective and efficient mechanism to get cash into the hands of those who need it most. The lack of conditions on how the recipients spend the money is based on the proven theory that recipients are best positioned to know what their own needs are and how to best meet them.²⁶

There have been several studies in international communities on promoting education through CCTs or UCTs that show promising results.²⁷

- An evaluation of a Mexico CCT program to incentivize parents to enroll their children in school found that it increased the enrollment of children in school.²⁸
- A randomized experiment in Burkina Faso found that CCTs were more effective than UCTs in promoting school enrollment in children that were less likely to attend school such as younger children and girls.²⁹
- A randomized control trial in Tanzania found that CCTs boosted school participation and primary school completion.³⁰

There are also an increasing number of studies that look into the effectiveness of cash transfers in the United States, although very few are specific to the educational context.³¹

²² Innovations for Poverty Action, Cash Transfers: Changing the Debate on Giving Cash to the Poor Case Studies, <https://www.poverty-action.org/impact/cash-transfers-changing-debate-giving-cash-poor>.

²³ Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, Giving directly to support poor households, (October 2018), <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/case-study/giving-directly-support-poor-households>.

²⁴ Benhassine, Najy, Florencia Devoto, Esther Duflo, Pascaline Dupas, and Victor Pouliquen. 2015. "Turning a Shove into a Nudge? A "Labeled Cash Transfer" for Education." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 7 (3): 86-125.

²⁵ Jeremy Shapiro, Johannes Haushofer, Charlotte Ringdal, Xiao Yu Wang, J-Pal, Improving Economic and Psychological Well-being through Unconditional Cash Transfer in Kenya, (2017), <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/improving-economic-and-psychological-well-being-through-unconditional-cash-transfer>.

²⁶ See generally <https://www.pointsourceyouth.org/directcashtransfers>.

²⁷ See for example Teresa, Karen Macours, John A. Maluccio, and Luis Tejerina. 2020. "Experimental long-term effects of early-childhood and school-age exposure to a conditional cash transfer program." *Journal of Development Economics* 143 (March): 1-20. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2019.102385>.

²⁸ Schultz, Paul. (2004). School Subsidies for the Poor: Evaluating a Mexican Strategy for Reducing Poverty.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247450176_School_Subsidies_for_the_Poor_Evaluating_a_Mexican_Strategy_for_Reducing_Poverty/citation/download.

²⁹ Akresh, Richard; de Walque, Damien; Kazianga, Harounan. 2013. Cash Transfers and Child Schooling: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation of the Role of Conditionality. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 6340. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/13127> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

³⁰ Evans, David K.; Hausladen, Stephanie; Kosec, Katrina; Reese, Natasha. 2014. Community-Based Conditional Cash Transfers in Tanzania: Results from a Randomized Trial. World Bank Study. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17220> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

³¹ Beth Hawkins, the 74 news, Could \$50 a Week Empower High School Students to Set and Meet Education Goals? This New Orleans School Aims to Find Out, (August 4, 2020), <https://www.the74million.org/article/could-50-a-week-empower-high-school-students-to-set-and-meet-education-goals-this-new-orleans-school-aims-to-find-out/>.

- The nonprofit education and policy organization MDRC piloted cash rewards in New York and Tennessee with low-income families. Conditioned on meeting goals in children’s education, family health, and parents’ work, a randomized controlled trial of 1,200 participants showed that payments reduced poverty, improved parental life satisfaction, and increased preventative dental care.³²
- In 2018, the Magnolia Mother’s Trust started providing low-income Black women with \$1,000 a month for a year and are now on their third cohort of participants. This program was designed to address and redress the centuries of racial discrimination Black communities have faced. An evaluation of the program found that participants were better able to meet basic needs, more likely to have health insurance, and more likely to graduate high school.³³
- Stockton, California’s (2020) guaranteed income initiative provided \$500 a month to 125 low-income individuals. Initial results were promising: participants were better able to meet basic needs, invest in their futures, and improve financial stability.³⁴
- The Abundant Birth Project (ongoing) provides monthly cash payments to pregnant Black and Pacific Island women in San Francisco with the goal of reducing disparities in birth outcomes.³⁵
- Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago (ongoing) helped design and implement a cash transfer program to assist youth experiencing homelessness in New York City.

The ‘Students Experiencing Homelessness Conditional Cash Transfer’ Pilot

New Mexico Appleseed, in partnership with the LANLF, CISD and WLVSD, designed and implemented an eight-month CCT pilot tailored to inadequately housed high school students who qualify for services under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act. The intervention served a total of 53 McKinney-Vento qualified high school students from two Title 1 schools: CISD and WLVSD. 43 participants completed the program.³⁶

The goal was to address the common challenges faced by students who were inadequately housed, highly rural and very low-income and the uncommon challenges these students faced having 100% remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. School facilities remained closed for much of the year although in February of 2021, the schools moved to a hybrid model of learning and in April of 2021 schools fully reopened, with remote learning remaining an option until the end of the school year. Additionally, schools in the pilot served students residing in Native American communities, which initiated curfews and closures to control the spread of the virus.

Pilot Design Phase

The pilot design phase began before the start of the intervention. After the CCT pilot launched, certain aspects were rethought and redesigned as needed. Having a flexible mindset as to redesigning the pilot as it was being implemented ensured that rigidity did not deprive students of the support they needed. New Mexico Appleseed and partners documented the changes and characterize them as “learnings.”

The intervention was designed to support the real-time academic, social-emotional and financial needs of participating students during the COVID-19 pandemic, while adding to the larger conversation about guaranteed income and cash transfers to address these same needs. Even though the target

³² Cynthia Miller and James Riccio, MDRC, New York City’s First Conditional Cash Transfer Program

What Worked, What Didn’t (May 2016), <https://www.mdrc.org/publication/new-york-city-s-first-conditional-cash-transfer-program>.

³³ See generally <https://springboardto.org/magnolia-mothers-trust/>.

³⁴ See generally <https://www.stocktondemonstration.org/>.

³⁵ See generally <https://www.expectingjustice.org/abundant-birth-project/>.

³⁶ The U.S. Department of Education states, “Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.”

communities and the reality of the pandemic were unique, the intervention raised generalizable research and design questions about the ethics and efficacy of a CCT.

Research and Evaluation Questions

- Can monetary incentives to inadequately housed students who may be in need of academic and social-emotional support increase engagement in school, tutoring and emotional support offerings?
- Does that engagement improve their short-term academic outcomes and social-emotional wellbeing?
- How do you design a pilot and evaluation tools targeting traditionally marginalized, traumatized and rural populations?
- Is it ethical to attach a condition to receive money in the context where the recipients lack the resources to meet their basic needs?

Identifying Pilot Communities

New Mexico Appleseed proposed two districts for the pilot within LANLF's service area where LANLF wanted to expand their outreach and where New Mexico Appleseed had established relationships and knew there was both need and interest in participation. LANLF stated that both Cuba and West Las Vegas had minimal to no participation in their educational programs and they hoped to strengthen their relationships in both districts.

Prior to the pilot, New Mexico Appleseed conducted a scan of the communities to better understand the needs and assets of each community. Cuba and West Las Vegas are tight-knit communities with strong cultural supports and family connections, despite generations of poverty and racial discrimination. The communities' assets include engaged and supportive school districts that value their students. Each community had committed school staff to ensure students had what they needed to succeed, as well as resilient families and students determined to continue with school. For example, CISD had existing protocols for distance learning during inclement weather. Students were familiar with remote learning because at times snow and mud made transportation to school difficult and necessitated remote schooling. The district was able to move into distance learning with comparative ease while keeping youth connected during the closure. Both districts used bus routes to deliver food, school work, and check on students as needed.

The CISD students are largely Native American and live in small and extremely rural communities, many of which have limited access to electricity, plumbing, or internet. WLVSD is made up of largely Hispanic students. While there is also extreme poverty in this district, WLVSD students were more likely to have internet access and the community is not as rural as Cuba. Both communities struggle with lack of access to services, underfunding for education and mental health, and have few jobs that pay a living wage.

Both communities are very rural; 46% of Sandoval County and 29% of San Miguel County residents have to drive more than thirty minutes each way to work and drive alone.³⁷ Second, about half of families owned the homes they lived in³⁸ and very few were new construction: In West Las Vegas 93% of households were built before 2000 and in Cuba 83%. Almost one-third of the households in West Las Vegas were built before 1970. In Cuba, more than one in five households are over fifty years old.³⁹ Less than 42% of Cuba and less than 55% of West Las Vegas households had access to broadband internet

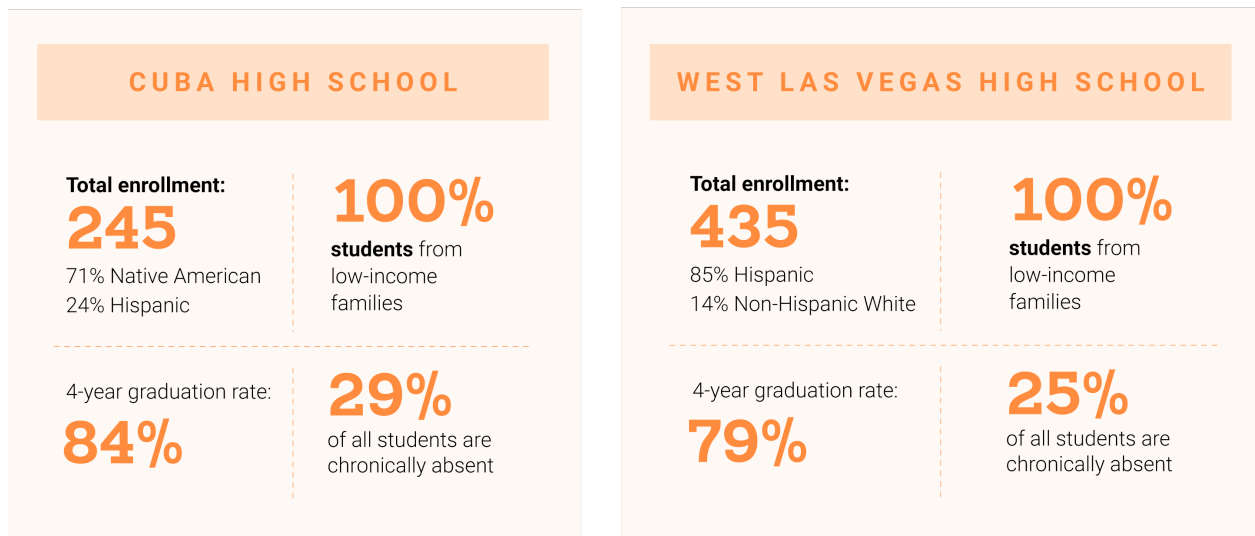
³⁷ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-mexico/2020/compare/snapshot?counties=35_047%2B35_043), Compare Counties (New Mexico 2021), https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-mexico/2020/compare/snapshot?counties=35_047%2B35_043.

³⁸ National Center for Education Statistics, District Demographic Dashboard, CISD and WLVSD, <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/3501560> and <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/3500660>.

³⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, District Demographic Dashboard, CISD and WLVSD, <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/3501560> and <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/3500660>.

and about two-thirds of parents and guardians with school aged children and youth were employed yet over half of families earned incomes below the poverty level.⁴⁰

The conditions of access to learning prior to COVID-19 were already difficult. The pre-existing inequities in rural communities were exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. For example, families not connected to electricity struggled to access remote learning and those without running water were unable to follow public health best practices to combat the COVID-19 virus. Challenges in these landscapes revealed themselves during the pilot. Families reported having to move to another county due to lost wages and limited employment opportunities. When aged housing suffered significant structural damage, the youth stayed home to help rebuild. Students had to prioritize work over schooling to keep their house heated and food on the table.



Each district was asked to develop a budget to cover administrative costs and ensure each eligible student would receive the intervention. The budget included staff time to administer the program, some case management, tutoring and other expenses, such as cameras for the online teachers and tutors, and travel for home visits. Based on this budgeting exercise, each district received a stipend of \$40,000 to support the intervention and offset programmatic costs. Districts also utilized existing funding to support this program.

New Mexico Appleseed drafted a grant agreement between New Mexico Appleseed and each district outlining the obligations of each party and the budget for the pilot. The grant agreement and attachments in Appendix B explain in more detail the obligations of New Mexico Appleseed, the districts and the students as well as the implementation protocols and evaluation plan.

Participant Recruitment

To qualify for participation in the pilot, students had to meet three criteria:

- (1) be enrolled in either CISD or WLVSD high school;
- (2) meet the definition of inadequately housed as defined by McKinney-Vento; and
- (3) sign an informed consent prior to participation.

⁴⁰ National Center for Education Statistics, District Demographic Dashboard, CISD and WLVSD, <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/3501560> and <https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/Edge/ACSDashboard/3500660>.

School counselors and McKinney-Vento staff recruited eligible students to voluntarily enroll in the pilot. All eligible students identified by launch date who agreed to pilot terms were included and newly identified students were added as space became available. Staff from both districts expressed surprise that eligible students turned down this opportunity and stated that it was more difficult than they expected to get students completely on board. New Mexico Appleseed asked for the opportunity to interview and compensate these participants for their time to learn more about their reasons for not participating, but districts reported that families were not interested. Once the pilot was underway and other families learned of the program, each district identified more eligible students living in each district than this pilot could serve. If a participant became disengaged in the pilot, school staff kept them on the roster until it became very clear that they were unable to participate. At this juncture, the districts were permitted to enroll new participants.

Over the 8-month pilot, approximately 53 high school students participated, of which 43 completed the program.

The Participants

The 53 participants were McKinney-Vento eligible high school students who were enrolled in CISD or WLVS. New Mexico Appleseed asked both districts to collect participants' race/ethnicity, current housing situation, children in household, age of participants and current grade level. As is common in New Mexico, most of the participants were either doubled up or living in substandard housing per McKinney-Vento law.⁴¹ (Appendix D compiles reported data from both districts.)



**I want to see them
succeed in this life.**

— Parent/Guardian

Participant/Guardian Surveys and Interviews Pre-intervention

Prior to and early on in the intervention, New Mexico Appleseed asked parents/guardians and students to fill out an online survey which asked questions such as how they were being affected by the pandemic and their employment status. New Mexico Appleseed also interviewed by phone 16 parents, guardians, and independent youth representing 19 students from both participant school districts.⁴² Interviewees were asked to share their understanding of the pilot project, what they hoped to get out of participating and what, if any, challenges they perceived might impact participation.

The terminology used during the interviews confused some of the participants. Families were unsure about what was meant by “pilot” and “stipend.” Once it became clear that these were not words families were familiar with, the interviewers changed the wording to program and money. Some of the questions asked during the interview process did not reveal meaningful information. For example, after asking, “did this pilot have any impact on the way you felt about yourself?” a few times and hearing participant reactions, interviewers chose to discontinue asking it. In future pilots, it is worth sharing interview questions with the targeted population to ensure the questions make sense, use familiar vocabulary, and capture more meaningful data; data that might include what families would want program developers,

⁴¹ The US Department of Education has provided guidance on this term: “The inclusion of substandard housing in the definition of homeless children and youths has caused some confusion because standards for adequate housing may vary by locality. In determining whether a child or youth is living in “substandard housing,” an LEA may consider whether the setting in which the family, child, or youth is living lacks one of the fundamental utilities such as water, electricity, or heat; is infested with vermin or mold; lacks a basic functional part such as a working kitchen or a working toilet; or may present unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities. Each city, county, or State may have its own housing codes that further define the kind of housing that may be deemed substandard.”

Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, August 2018, A-3, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/legislation.html>.

⁴² All families, youth, and school staff were provided with a \$50 gift card or check for each entrance or exit interview they completed.

fundere, and policy makers to know about their overall experience. During this process, New Mexico Appleseed confirmed that families knew what the roles and expectations were for students, parents and guardians, and school and New Mexico Appleseed staff and where the families could reach out for additional support if needed.

Responses to the surveys and interviews included:

- **Parents struggled to support their kids financially and academically:** 42% of parents said they were unable to pay for rent, mortgage, or property taxes and 46% said they had difficulty helping with schoolwork.
- **Parents want support for their students.** The most prevalent theme expressed throughout the interviews was that parents/guardians hoped this pilot would support their students' academic success.
- **Parents saw internet access as a barrier** to meeting the conditions, which school staff reiterated in meetings with New Mexico Appleseed.

(Full survey and interview questions can be found in Appendix E.)



Knowing they get this extra help in school makes them look forward to being more productive, and proactive in class.

— Parent/Guardian

The Intervention

Participants received a basic needs stipend of \$500 for each month, up to eight months during the 2020-2021 school year in exchange for the completion of the following requirements:⁴³

- 1) **Weekly 1–2-hour tutoring sessions** designed to assist students with completing work and instruction in reading and math.
- 2) **Weekly check-ins** to address social-emotional issues, academic challenges, and basic needs of students through-out the school year. These check-ins were a mix of online, over the phone and in-person, including home visits.
- 3) **Attend school 90%** of the time.
- 4) **Complete 90% of their schoolwork** on time.

⁴³ "Compassionate Exceptions" were provided at the districts' discretion and with Appleseed's full support for students who could not meet the monthly requirements for reasons such as internet issues, mental health challenges, family emergencies, work conflicts, and illness. In Appleseed's view the Compassionate Exception was an integral component of the pilot that recognized the multiple, unexpected, and complex challenges that the students experienced in their day-to-day lives.



[The basic need stipend] helped a lot with the bills, utilities, food and gas.

— Parent/Guardian

CISD hired teachers from the school district to provide the weekly tutoring and a clinical licensed master level social worker to conduct the weekly socio-emotional sessions. Sessions were conducted on-line until mid-April when the district re-opened for in-person learning. At that point, school staff stated students were looking forward to meeting in person after months of reporting feeling extremely isolated.

WLVPS also hired teachers and counselors from the school district to provide the weekly tutoring and counseling sessions. The two teachers who provided the tutoring stated that they had established relationships with a few of the students either through teaching siblings or because they recently taught middle school prior to joining the high school staff.

When school re-opened in mid-April, many of the students resisted coming back to in person learning. Staff stated that students expressed fear of bringing the virus home to their vulnerable household members. So, the option to attend school online continued.



I was failing a lot of classes at the beginning of the semester, and [the pilot] helped me pay more and turn in my work.

— Student

Both districts met with the New Mexico Appleseed team on a monthly basis and provided a monthly report that tracked attendance, grades, and participation (Appendix C). During these meetings staff would share experiences, concerns and give general updates. It was also at this time that New Mexico Appleseed witnessed how the relationships between staff and participants were strengthening. Staff became more aware of the various and unique circumstances of their students. For the few students who were struggling to complete the school year, staff from both WLVPS and CISD worked hard to ensure these students had the support and encouragement they needed to get through this difficult year.

The Payments

The payment of the CCT evolved during the course of the pilot. Families were told by school districts to focus their expenditures on basic needs, but participants decided what their basic needs were. Initially, New Mexico Appleseed issued payments directly to providers for housing, utilities, car payments, medical bills, and other needs, or participants could choose to receive establishment-specific gift cards.

New Mexico Appleseed structured the payments like this so as not to jeopardize any public benefits participants might receive, as many benefits programs have income and asset limits. Within the first few months of the pilot, however, challenges with this approach arose, including vendors rejecting third party checks and charging extra fees as a result and participants having to travel long distances to big box stores only to be unable to find what they needed. As a result of this feedback and with the support of the LANLF, New Mexico Appleseed pivoted and provided \$500 checks, or if the participants preferred, Visa gift cards. Local banks agreed to cash the checks for participants who were unbanked.



The most important was the car payments. We were unsure how we were going to pay. I slipped into a depression. Having this help, really did help me a lot.

— Parent/Guardian



Ethics of Conditional vs. Unconditional Cash Transfers

Because of power imbalances between who in society has money and who does not, mostly based on racial inequity, the ethics of adding a condition to have one's basic needs met is ethically fraught. Every human being deserves and has a right to have their basic needs met. There are arguments in favor of conditions, such as attending school, that may ensure that no matter how the money is spent an academic benefit accrues to the child. The line between incentive for participation and punishment for lack of participation can be difficult, if not impossible, to draw.

CCTs have created an ongoing debate in the cash transfer field, and one that New Mexico Appleseed recognized as it co-designed the pilot. However, the state and national data on school participation during the COVID-19 shut-down showed that a condition to engage in school may have been as impactful in the long-term as the money itself would be in the short-term. Regardless of how the money was spent, the student participants also likely benefited from the accrued academic engagement.

As the pilot progressed and the pandemic and impact of the prolonged shutdown of 2020 and early 2021 continued, New Mexico Appleseed grappled with the ethics of imposing any conditions on payments intended to help participants meet their basic needs. New Mexico Appleseed worried that meeting the conditions might be inadvertently creating more stress and uncertainty in their lives rather than alleviating it and contemplated changing course and eliminating the conditions all together.

After extensive conversations with the school districts, LANLF, and other CCT experts, including an ethicist, the conditions remained with the Compassionate Exception described below. The experts' consensus leaned towards the notion that to the extent payments were conditioned on a behavior, education was probably the most acceptable behavior to require and reward. The districts also felt that the requirements of the pilot were achieving their own district objectives. The students were doing their work, checking in, were more engaged, and the majority of the students were completing the requirements. Instead of scrapping the conditions, New Mexico Appleseed encouraged the districts to use the Compassionate Exception as often as needed and take into account the totality of a student's circumstances.

“Compassionate Exception” to Address Ethical Concerns

New Mexico Appleseed's experience in previous pilots with Albuquerque Public Schools and Las Cruces Public Schools demonstrated the importance of having a “**Compassionate Exception**” to conditionality. The Compassionate Exception was a creation of New Mexico Appleseed and recognized the difficult circumstances many of the youth faced as well as the connectivity issues. During the monthly meetings between school districts and New Mexico Appleseed, school staff reported students experiencing extreme hardships outside of the academic arena including physical injuries, severe housing issues, and familial deaths. New Mexico Appleseed did not want students to feel that the pilot program was punitive or introduced additional stress and strife into what was an already traumatic and turbulent time. By acknowledging the effort youth made to participate and encouraging the students to contact school staff to acknowledge and address barriers to their participation, New Mexico Appleseed hoped to create a program that encouraged and supported participation rather than punishing lack of participation.

New Mexico Appleseed encouraged flexibility in meeting the conditions based on each student's individual circumstance and supported school staff using the Compassionate Exception as needed. CISD also created a “pause” option for students who did not participate for the month. Based on individual circumstances, districts allowed students who were unable to meet monthly requirements a partial stipend. (See Appendix C for participation rates throughout the pilot.)

Program Outcomes

Quantitative Data

Data collection revealed positive program outcomes:

- **High Retention Rate:** Between both districts, the program experienced over 80% retention rate.
- **High Graduation Rate:** 93% (13/14) of participant seniors graduated on time during the 2020-2021 school year. This is promising considering that New Mexico's graduation rate for homeless students in 2019, a non-pandemic year, was 51%.⁴⁴ While this cannot be attributed solely to the pilot, given the participant feedback post-intervention it seems likely that this type of support helped them stay connected to school at a time when many students, regardless of housing status, were disengaging or dropping out throughout the nation.⁴⁵
- **High GPAs:** By the end of the pilot, about half of the participants had a 2.5 GPA or higher. While there is not accessible data for the prior years' GPA data for comparison, staff observed that students' grades improved over the course of the pilot and that more students completed and turned in work on time. Students also noted that tutoring helped in this regard.

Qualitative Data

Interviews and other qualitative data collection revealed positive perceptions of and outcomes from the intervention. New Mexico Appleseed conducted **over 40 exit interviews with students, families, and staff**. The feedback on the pilot program was overwhelmingly positive.

- **Conditionality helped motivate students:** The program requirements (i.e., the conditionality) of this intervention were a major factor in keeping most of the youth enrolled in this pilot, engaged in their academics, and built stronger relationships with school staff that based on interviews, reportedly continued to flourish beyond the pilot.
- **Project yielded a positive impact on grades:** Staff stated that the intervention helped students be more responsible and had a positive impact on their grades.
- **Money was spent on necessities:** 100% of students and parents stated that the program was helpful in paying bills. Families spent the money on necessities such as car payments, utilities, home repairs and weatherization, braces, phone bills, gas, and food.
- **Universal satisfaction:** 100% of parents, students, and staff would recommend the program.



[Tutoring] was key to keep me motivated. I needed this.

— Student

⁴⁴ State of New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee, Annual Report to the First Session of the 55th New Mexico Legislature, January 2021, pg. 59, https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LESC/Reports_To_The_Legislature.

⁴⁵ Lost in the Masked Shuffle and Virtual Void: Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Amidst the Pandemic, Schoolhouse Connection and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan (2020), <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/lost-in-the-masked-shuffle-and-virtual-void/>.

- **Tutoring was perceived as critical to success:** 100% of students noted how helpful the tutoring was and some said they would not have passed their classes if it was not for the tutoring sessions.
- **Financial peace-of-mind increased focus:** 100% of students stated that the money helped motivate them to focus on school and meet their needs, such as buying clothes, shoes, or school supplies or paying phone bills.
- **Students' struggles are major:** Students and families reported that students juggled work, family obligations, school, and tutoring and drove long distances or hiked to high elevations to access internet.
- **Conditions were perceived as fair:** During the exit interviews, 100% of the families thought the conditions were fair, the stipends were helpful, and 100% expressed a wish that the program would continue and expand to include other families. This feedback implied that the conditions to receive the cash transfer were not harmful or onerous.
- **Students needed the support:** Most students stated that they mainly participated in the pilot to get the extra academic and financial support.
- **Support motivated students:** Most students stated that participating in the pilot motivated them to focus on school and had a positive impact on their overall grades.



The Program made me focus more on school because it pushed me to do better.

— Student

Participant/Guardian Surveys Post-intervention

- After the intervention concluded, New Mexico Appleseed attempted to survey all students and parents/guardians. Due to the low response rate, however, and lack of clarity around whether the student or parent/guardian had completed the survey, the responses were not included as part of the post-pilot evaluation.

Program Learnings and Recommendations

The pilot's evaluation and design methods yielded significant intelligence about program design for future application. Lessons learned include:

- **Community and Participant Input is Critical in Conditional Cash Transfer Design**

A best practice when developing a CT program, particularly one with conditionality, is to involve the community that is the focus of the program in the pilot design. Depending on the population and time available to design the program, this can include focus groups, interviews, or a full design team that includes people with lived experience. If it is possible to create a design team prior to the intervention, include those who meet participant qualifications or have lived experience. School employees cannot be proxies for the students' perspectives when it comes to intervention design, in particular when creating requirements to receive money for basic needs. Participants have a perspective that must be considered when designing an intervention like this. The use of CCTs may have a continued role to play in cash transfers, but the development of conditions should generally incorporate meaningful input from the affected community and have a demonstrable benefit.

- **Design Survey Instruments and Interview Questions with the Target Population**

New Mexico Appleseed designed the survey and interview questions, with input from school staff and evaluation experts. While the questions provided helpful information for evaluation, some did not work or were clearly confusing to participants. In the future, New Mexico Appleseed recommends developing these questions in advance with input from the community to ensure they make sense, are understandable, and provide actionable information.

- **Right-Size Any Conditions**

Ensure that any conditions (program requirements) have a demonstrable benefit that outweighs the risk of harm stemming from mandating a condition. Cash transfers become more ethically fraught when you attach conditions, because all people should have unconditional access to basic needs.

- **Engage Ethics Expertise**

Evaluating the ethics of conditionality needs to be front and center in pilot design, and on-going through the course of the pilot. If possible, retain the services of an ethicist to better parse the ethical issues involved with conditional cash transfers and working with vulnerable populations.

- **Use Appropriate Evaluation Tools**

Evaluators need a thorough understanding of which evaluation tools are most effective with highly mobile, vulnerable and rural populations. Age, education levels and culture need to be taken into account when designing evaluation tools such as surveys and interviews.

- **Ensure Survey Respondent Consistency**

Promote consistency around who fills out surveys. It was not always clear whether the parents, caregivers, or students had completed the survey and it made the results difficult to interpret.

- **Implement the Compassionate Exception**

When working with vulnerable populations, any condition needs to recognize the context of people's lives. For example, the Compassionate Exception that was part of this pilot mitigated the very real struggles many students faced in attending school and tutoring. About halfway through the pilot, New Mexico

Appleseed revisited the idea of conditions and encouraged schools to make use of the Compassionate Exception.

The creation of a “Compassionate Exception” allowed for flexibility with the requirements when students’ lives made meeting those requirements too difficult or impossible. Barriers outside of the student’s control must be part of the calculation when determining whether or not program requirements have been met.

- **Cash is Best**

New Mexico Appleseed initially provided gift cards and vendor payments to families, which presented myriad issues. Families wholeheartedly supported the switch to cash, which empowered them to meet their needs in the way they saw best. With a highly mobile student, consider issuing the benefit to the student instead of a parent or guardian.

- **Consider the Impact of Cash Transfers on Public Benefits**

There is a growing national movement to explore how cash pilots interact with public benefits and find ways to ensure families do not experience a loss of benefits because of increased income. Any cash pilot program should at a minimum disclose to families that participation could affect any benefits for which they are eligible and ideally include benefits counseling. While no families reported losing benefits, future pilots should still take into account this possibility.

- **Home Visits by School Staff Can Play a Vital Role in the Success of Similar Pilots**

This pilot demonstrated the value that home visits can play for hard to reach and highly mobile students. The purpose of the visits was supportive, not punitive, and were conducted by school outreach staff. While the return to in-person learning meant that face-to-face interaction could once again take place at school, home visits may still be important for some students.

- **Choose Engaged Partners**

School district partners who see their role as proactively supporting students to success may improve retention, the meeting of conditions, and positive academic and social-emotional outcomes. Staff made countless home visits, phone calls, texts, and emails. Future studies could look at the outreach proactivity by school district as a factor for high levels of engagement.

- **Compensate Partners**

Pay schools for salaried or hourly FTE(s) to oversee the program and fulfill the program requirements, including tutoring and social-emotional support. Ensuring that schools have adequate financial support to provide tutoring and social emotional support is a non-negotiable part of any program budget. The requirements on staff and teachers are too burdensome to add on to an already full-time job. Work, including the sharing of one’s expertise and experience, needs to be compensated.

- **Clear Written Agreements and On-going Communication Leads to a Strong Partnership**

New Mexico Appleseed, the districts, and LANLF worked to develop a grant agreement and supporting documents that laid out the responsibilities and expectations of each party. New Mexico Appleseed also set monthly check-in zooms with the districts, although communication was more frequent over text, email, and phone calls. This helped ensure fidelity to the model, as well as allow for prompt adjustments to unexpected developments.

Conclusion

Data collected to evaluate program efficacy hinted at answers to the research questions that motivated the design and implementation of the pilot in the first place. While these inferences cannot be generalized to other CCTs, they do point to the need for further research. The qualitative and quantitative data point to the following findings:

- **Monetary incentives** to inadequately housed students in this pilot **increased engagement in school, tutoring and emotional support offerings.**
- That **engagement may have been a factor in improving short-term academic outcomes** and indicators of social-emotional wellbeing.
- To design a pilot and evaluation tools focused on traditionally marginalized, traumatized and rural populations, there must be at least two critical variables met: **adequate compensation for the participating local school district and students and families must be involved in the program design.**
- **It may be ethical to attach a condition to receive money** in the context where the recipients lack the resources to meet their basic needs if the participants or those with similar lived experience are part of the design process and agree to the condition and the benefits from completing the condition outweigh potential harm.

When students are unable to meet their basic needs on a regular basis, it can be next to impossible to make school a priority. Offering families, or the students, a monthly stipend in exchange for their students' participation in school is a way to reward their continued participation while allowing the students to better meet their basic needs. Despite the short duration of this pilot, it was significant and impactful to many families. It provided financial support and helped students stay engaged in school during a time that widened the achievement gap between those who are living in poverty and those who have the financial means and living environment to help students meet their full potential.

A CCT model for inadequately housed students, where academic and social-emotional support requirements must be met to receive the CCT, has promise to help support students' continued participation in school and provide students and their families needed financial assistance to increase access to basic needs. School staff, parents and guardians, and students all noted that this CCT pilot helped promote school engagement and several students observed that the tutoring was helpful in achieving passing grades. Although there are no definitive quantitative measures of how academic and psychosocial indicators may have improved for this pilot, the qualitative data revealed family and youth expressing how helpful it was at a critical and challenging time. Almost all participants stated it would be helpful for other families like theirs and they would participate again.

Cash transfers, whether conditional or unconditional, help meet the unfulfilled need of under-resourced families to have access to unrestricted cash to pay for simple items such as transportation, food, housing, clothing and other needs that are not covered by the existing social safety net work. Using payments like these to gather evidence for future policy change is critical to address the trauma of and damage created by poverty.

Appendix A

The type of employment reported in initial survey by parents and guardians of youth participating in the pilot:

- Education
- Transportation
- Health care
- Retail
- Administration

New Mexico Living Wage and Other Stats

Living wage in New Mexico (required annual income **after** taxes are deducted- this is the minimum needed take home pay): ⁴⁶

- 1 adult 0 children: \$23,579
- 1 adult 1 child: \$48,360
- 1 adult 2 children: \$59,598
- 1 adult 3 children: \$76,683
- 2 adults (1 working) 0 children: \$39,350
- 2 adults (1 working) 1 child: \$46,948
- 2 adults (1 working) 2 children: \$53,299
- 2 adults (1 working) 3 children: \$58,006
- 2 adults (2 working) 0 children: \$39,350
- 2 adults (2 working) 1 child: \$53,421
- 2 adults (2 working) 2 children: \$66,245
- 2 adults (2 working) 3 children: \$77,425

Typical Annual Salaries of Occupational Areas in New Mexico (**before** taxes/deductions)⁴⁷

- Community and Social Service: \$45,116
- Educational, Training and Library: \$46,671
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media: \$46,815
- Healthcare Support: \$25,065
- Protective Service: \$39,121
- Food Preparation & Serving Related: \$20,860
- Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance: \$24,860
- Personal Care & Service: \$24,318
- Sales & Related: \$26,579
- Office & Administrative Support: \$34,241
- Farming, Fishing, & Forestry: \$23,673
- Construction & Extraction: \$40,564
- Installation, Maintenance, & Repair: \$42,958
- Production: \$36,461
- Transportation & Material Moving: \$31,602

⁴⁶ Typical expenses include food, childcare, medical, housing, transportation, civic, and other.

⁴⁷ Living Wage Calculation for New Mexico, <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/35>. As of August 6, 2021

Other relevant New Mexico demographic stats:⁴⁸

- NM per capita personal income: \$43,326 (US per capita personal income is \$54,420)
- 40.1% households with children being raised by single parent as of 2018 (US average 32.5%)
- Top 3 counties with children being raised by single parents:
 - Guadalupe 64%
 - Sierra 60.7%
 - San Miguel 58%
- 10.9% of children are being raised by grandparents, 2011-2015.
- Multigenerational households⁴⁹ as of 2019: 4.45%.
- State unemployment rate as of October 2020, 8.1%.
- Poverty rate as of 2019, 18.2%. Top 3 counties:
 - McKinley 34.8%
 - Socorro 29.7%
 - San Miguel 28.2%
- Poverty rate of children (under 5) as of 2019, 28.5%. Top 3 counties:
 - Catron: 52.9%
 - Colfax: 52.4%
 - San Miguel: 49%
- Data from 2017 (most recent)⁵⁰
 - 39.4% of NM households have debt in collections
 - 23.4% have medical debt in collections
 - 41.55% of households live below 200% of poverty level
 - Average unsecured debt: \$8,342
 - Percent of population living in rural area: 22.6%
 - 64.4% of adults do not have a college degree
 - In 2017 the unemployment rate was 6.7%
 - Transportation costs as a percent of income: 28.1%

⁴⁸ Human Services Department Data Book Volume 2 (January 2021), <https://www.hsd.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Data-Book-2021-lo-res-1.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Grandparents and grandchildren living in same household.

⁵⁰ Urban Institute, Dashboard Data, <https://apps.urban.org/features/disrupting-food-insecurity/index.html>

Appendix B

Grant Agreement and Attachments for Cuba and West Las Vegas

Cuba Independent School District
50 County Road 13
Cuba, NM 87013

Re: Grant Agreement Between Cuba Independent School District (CISD) and New Mexico Appleseed for a 2020-2021 Students Experiencing Homelessness Learning Pilot

October 9, 2020

Dear Dr. Sanchez-Griego, Dr. Donna Navarrete, and Ms. Maestas:

We are very pleased to inform you that the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Foundation has awarded a generous grant to New Mexico Appleseed and CISD. The grant will enable Appleseed and CISD to deploy a targeted solution to improve and stabilize the academic and socio-emotional outcomes for students who are currently experiencing homelessness and eligible for McKinney-Vento services with your school district. The goal of this pilot is to create an effective, scalable and replicable model to help homeless students succeed in school by supporting them academically, psychologically and with financial assistance to help meet their family's basic needs. West Las Vegas School District has also been selected to participate in the pilot.

The \$120,000 for CISD and CISD student families is allocated as follows:

School Districts Admin Cost	Staff time for dedicated pilot coordinator (approximately 10-20 hours per week), data collection, check-in meetings, training, travel, increase identification, supplies	\$20,000
Tutoring Expenses	Weekly 1-hour tutoring for 20 students for 30 weeks	\$20,000
Family Stipends	20 high school student families at \$500/month for 8 months (administered monthly by Appleseed)	\$80,000

This Grant Agreement incorporates:

- **Attachment A:** Overview of Students Experiencing Homelessness Learning Pilot
- **Attachment B:** Required Activities per Grant Agreement
- **Attachment C:** Data Collection and Sharing Agreement

In light of the size of this grant, LANL and New Mexico Appleseed have rigorous expectations as to how the pilot is implemented and evaluated. To this end, there are three basic tenets of the Agreement: (1) Fidelity to the model; (2) Rapid response problem identification and solving; (3) Data collection and sharing.

We are thrilled to commence this pilot with your district and stand in awe of the commitment CISD demonstrates on a daily basis to its families. We know we will learn so much from you and your families in the months ahead that will assist us in developing a successful program to serve families throughout New Mexico.

After you review this Grant Agreement and Attachments A, B and C, please acknowledge and agree to the pilot requirements by signing below. In order to receive these funds, both the CISD superintendent and School Board chair/president must each sign.

In partnership,

Jennifer A. Ramo
Executive Director, New Mexico Appleseed
jramo@nmappleseed.org

I acknowledge and agree to the contents of this Grant Agreement and Attachments A, B, and C.

Name: Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego, Ed.D
Title: Superintendent, CISD
Date: _____

Name: Dr. Donna Navarrete Ph.D
Title: Executive Director of Data & Accountability/Federal Programs Director
Date: _____

Name: Dianna Maestas
Title: School Board President, CISD
Date: _____

West Las Vegas School District
 179 Bridge Street
 Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701

Re: Grant Agreement Between West Las Vegas School District (WLVSD) and New Mexico Appleseed for a 2020-2021 Students Experiencing Homelessness Learning Pilot

October 9, 2020

Dear Mr. Gutierrez and Mr. Marquez:

We are very pleased to inform you that the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Foundation has awarded a generous grant to New Mexico Appleseed and WLVSD. The grant will enable Appleseed and WLVSD to deploy a targeted solution to improve and stabilize the academic and socio-emotional outcomes for students who are currently experiencing homelessness and eligible for McKinney-Vento services with your school district. The goal of this pilot is to create an effective, scalable and replicable model to help homeless students succeed in school by supporting them academically, psychologically and with financial assistance to help meet their family’s basic needs. Cuba Independent School District has also been selected to participate in the pilot.

The \$120,000 for WLVSD and WLVSD student families is allocated as follows:

School Districts Admin Cost	Staff time for dedicated pilot coordinator (approximately 10-20 hours per week), data collection, check-in meetings, training, travel, increase identification, supplies	\$20,000
Tutoring Expenses	Weekly 1-hour tutoring for 20 students for 30 weeks	\$20,000
Family Stipends	20 high school student families at \$500/month for 8 months (administered monthly by Appleseed)	\$80,000

This Grant Agreement incorporates:

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In light of the size of this grant, LANL and New Mexico Appleseed have rigorous expectations as to how the pilot is implemented and evaluated. To this end, there are three basic tenets of the Agreement: (1) Fidelity to the model; (2) Rapid response problem identification and solving; (3) Data collection and sharing.

We are thrilled to commence this pilot with your district and stand in awe of the commitment WLVS D demonstrates on a daily basis to its families. We know we will learn so much from you and your families in the months ahead that will assist us in developing a successful program to serve families throughout New Mexico.

After you review this Grant Agreement and Attachments A, B and C, please acknowledge and agree to the pilot requirements by signing below. In order to receive these funds, both the WLVS D superintendent and School Board chair/president must each sign.

In partnership,

Jennifer A. Ramo
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I acknowledge and agree to the contents of this Grant Agreement and Attachments A, B, and C.

Name: Christopher Gutierrez
Title: Superintendent, WLVS D
Date: _____

Name: Patrick Marquez
Title: School Board President, WLVS D
Date: _____

Attachment A

Northern New Mexico Project Overview

Overview

New Mexico Appleseed, in partnership with West Las Vegas School District and funded by a generous grant from the LANL Foundation, will deploy a targeted solution to improve and stabilize the academic socio-emotional outcomes for students experiencing homelessness. The goal of this intervention is to create an effective, scalable and replicable model to help students experiencing homelessness succeed in school by supporting them academically, psychologically and with financial assistance to help meet their family's basic needs.

Rationale & Background Information

In the school year 2019-2020, the New Mexico Public Education Department identified 8,983 children in New Mexico schools as homeless or housing insecure under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which authorizes the federal [Education for Homeless Children and Youth \(EHCY\) Program](#). This is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It is meant to define homelessness in the educational context and provide certain rights to ensure equal access to education.

Children experiencing homelessness under this definition may be bouncing from house to house, living in overcrowded situations or in housing without utilities, staying in a shelter, or even sleeping on the street or in a car. Children and youth who are housing unstable are more likely to have mental health and substance abuse problems, perform poorly in school, and less likely to graduate than their housed peers. In the context of COVID-19, these children have extensive needs to keep them safe, healthy and learning.

National trends show that students begin dropping out of high school in significant numbers around the 9th grade, and around the age of 15 and 16.⁵¹ According to the Department of Health, for the 2016-2017 school year the graduation rate for high school students was 67.9% .⁵² For homeless students, the rate is even lower. According to the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) data prepared by the National Center for Homeless Education, it is only 52.2% .⁵³ NM PED reports 4,108 McKinney-Vento students attending middle and high school in NM. These students are at particular risk of becoming disengaged from school and eventually dropping out. Risk factors for dropping out include attendance, achievement and behavior, and of course, homelessness.

There is ample evidence that the following hypotheses are correct. First, low-income families need cash to meet basic needs and even begin to think about stabilizing. Second, that those families can most effectively determine their own spending priorities. Finally, making access to that cash contingent upon their child participating in school not only addresses the lack of basic needs as a barrier to education, but also once the benefits of the cash have been exhausted, the education benefits remain.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2019, National Center for Education Statistics, p. 11.

⁵² This data was provided from New Mexico's Indicator Based Information System. It does not include students who receive their GED in this computation of the graduation rate. NM-IBIS, Department of Health, New Mexico High School Graduation Rates by County, New Mexico, 2016-2017 Four Year Cohort, https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/indicator/complete_profile/HSGraduation.html.

⁵³ Federal Data Summary School Years 2015-16 Through 2017-18 Education for Homeless Children and Youth, National Center for Homeless Education (January 2020) pgs. 24-25, <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Federal-Data-Summary-SY-15.16-to-17.18-Published-1.30.2020.pdf>.

⁵⁴ See generally Berk Ozler, World Bank Blog, How Should We Design Cash Transfer Programs (February 6, 2020), <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/how-should-we-design-cash-transfer-programs>.

A conditional cash transfer has certain actions that a recipient must take to receive the transfer. An unconditional cash transfer has no criteria attached to the transfer. Because this pilot program has expectations that the participants must meet to receive the transfer, it is a conditional cash transfer program. That said, there are no conditions on how the participants spend their money with the exception stated below required to avoid jeopardizing benefits.

Providing cash directly to low-income recipients in New Mexico is problematic because there is a risk it will affect their eligibility or reduce the level of their public benefits. As such, this pilot program will provide a financial transfer (the “Basic Needs Stipend”) to meet participants’ basic needs. Participants will choose how to direct the Basic Needs Stipend including to their housing provider, utilities, car payments, or may instead receive establishment specific gift cards.

Pilot Program

The participating district will offer the program to families that are inadequately housed as defined in the Inclusion Criteria below. There are available funds for twenty students to participate. The families will receive a Basic Needs Stipend (BNS) of \$500 for each of the 8 months that their child successfully completes participation in the program, as set forth in Table 1 below. Eligible students and family opt in voluntarily and agree to the provisions of the program. The activities and expectations for students and families are outlined in the below tables.

Table 1

Student Participation Requirements
Students must participate in 90% of weekly check-ins with school district staff. Check-ins will cover the social-emotional issues, academic challenges, and basic needs of students throughout the school year.
Students must participate in 90% of weekly 1-hour tutoring sessions. The tutoring sessions will assist students with completing work and providing support and extra instruction on academic challenges the student may be experiencing.
Student must complete 90% of school work and turn it in on time. (The method of submitting work in a timely fashion will vary from student to student.)
Completion of intake, midway and exit surveys and/or interviews.

Table 2

Parent/Guardian Participation Requirements
Participation in initial needs assessment and monthly case management sessions with McKinney-Vento staff.
Participation in goal-setting and stability plan, including delineating the basic needs family needs financial assistance with.
If family opts for a gift card must submit a photograph or original receipt for how gift card was spent. All receipts from the prior month must be turned in before Basic Needs Stipend will be issued.
Completion of entrance and exit interviews and surveys. (Families will receive a gift card for each interview they complete to compensate for the time.)

The evaluation

There are few studies that look into the effectiveness of cash transfers in the United States to incentivize student participation in academic activities for students living in homeless families. However, there have been several cash transfer programs launched in recent years that show success in having meaningful impact on families' financial lives⁵⁵ and numerous studies in international communities on promoting educational attainment through conditional or unconditional cash transfers that have shown promising results.^{56,57}

Appleseed, in partnership with school districts plans to evaluate how effective the pilot program is, including whether the Basic Needs Stipend improved academic, social-emotional, and family stability outcomes. Data such as attendance (e.g. signing on), work completion, and any assessments conducted in the fall will also be used to evaluate the program efficacy. The data of students enrolled in the pilot will be compared to the outcomes of a similarly situated comparison group who did not participate in the pilot.

Evaluation Questions

Primary Evaluation Questions

1. Do financial incentives to parents result in their child's successful attendance and participation for school, tutoring, and counseling support?
2. Does successful participation improve academic and/or psychosocial indicators?

Secondary Evaluation Questions

1. How will families in housing insecure situations choose to spend the financial transfers?
2. What do spending choices tell us about the barriers these families experience in attaining stability?

Participants

Students recruited by the school district's McKinney-Vento program and who voluntarily agree to participate in the free program and abide by requirements. This group will receive a \$500 Basic Needs Stipend for each month that their child successfully completed the requirements explained above.

Inclusion Criteria for Participants

- Student must be enrolled in a district school during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Students must meet McKinney-Vento (MKV) requirements at onset of program.
- Parent or guardian is willing to sign informed consent and agreement and provide information on how money is used.
- Student participates voluntarily and signs and acknowledges that he or she understands the expectations of the pilot.

⁵⁵ The [Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration](#), [Magnolia Mother's Trust](#), [Family Independence initiative \(FII\)](#) and [LIFT](#)

⁵⁶ Banda, Emmanuel et al. "Acceptability of an economic support component to reduce early pregnancy and school dropout in Zambia: a qualitative case study." *Global health action* vol. 12,1 (2019): 1685808. doi:10.1080/16549716.2019.1685808.

⁵⁷ Zulaika, Garazi et al. "Menstrual cups and cash transfer to reduce sexual and reproductive harm and school dropout in adolescent schoolgirls: study protocol of a cluster-randomized controlled trial in western Kenya." *BMC public health* vol. 19,1 1317. 21 Oct. 2019, doi:10.1186/s12889-019-7594-3.

Exclusion Criteria

- Student has not been identified and enrolled in the MKV program during SY 20-21.
- Parent or guardian is unwilling to sign informed consent.
- Parent is not willing to provide information on how money was used.

Comparison Group

A similar set of students who did not have access to the program will be used as a comparison group. For larger districts, this group might be McKinney-Vento students who did not participate in the program. For smaller districts, this might be a group of at-risk, highly mobile students who did not participate in the program. If a comparison group is not available, using data from the participants to see what their school attendance rates are for the years preceding and proceeding the pilot might also be illustrative to determine whether the pilot achieves its stated goals.

Follow-up

In partnership with school districts, the school attendance and academic participation for participating students who remain in the district after 1 year will be compared to pre-intervention indicators. De-identified information for students who move out of the district will be requested from PED. The districts will assist with Appleseed in obtaining this information.

Data Collection and Sharing

Appleseed will have access to data related to this pilot and school districts will collect, process and oversee student specific data. Data relevant to the pilot will be shared on a monthly basis. See Attachment C for data required for evaluation.

Safety Considerations

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, thousands of parents and guardians have lost their jobs, housing, and options to provide for their families. This has resulted in more families competing for resources that are already limited. In addition, the stay at home orders that require families to be enclosed in close quarters for days and hours on end has added strain to an already highly stressful situation. Adding a financial incentive to a task that may not be completed due to barriers that are unclear at this time, may have unintended adverse consequences to the students and families.

Scalability

Ideally, these proposed interventions and evaluation will allow us to build out successful distance learning plans to promote greater student engagement that can then be expanded to districts around the state, in the event of further school closures in the fall and winter. Knowing how to develop a successful distance learning program is also helpful in a state where many students live in rural or frontier areas and even in normal times, may struggle to access academic opportunities.

Attachment B

Scope of Work

New Mexico Appleseed will:

- Design pilot program based on evidence from other cash transfer programs around the world and best practices for supporting homeless and/or inadequately housed students in an academic setting.
- Draft necessary legal and other documents including informed consents, MOUs, pilot design, surveys, recruiting documents and will translate documents as needed.
- Conduct entrance and exit interviews with the family. (Families will be provided with a gift card to compensate them for their time.)
- Provide district with regular legal and policy support and technical assistance (training, online tools, other support as needed).
- Project manage the pilots to ensure problems are identified and addressed and that there is fidelity to the model, including pre-launch meetings, regular monthly check-ins or more frequently as needed, and post-pilot evaluation and de-briefing meetings with district staff and families.
- Provide Basic Need Stipend directly to housing and utility and other service providers for each student's family enrolled in program.
- Purchase gift cards as needed for families enrolled in program to be distributed by school district staff.
- Participate in monthly phone calls to see how pilot is going and review monthly data sharing.
- Evaluate results and produce final report in partnership with districts, including with recommendations on how to implement and scale the pilot program.

School District will:

- Designate a pilot coordinator.
- Recruit eligible MVK students, explain pilot program, and have participants sign informed consent and program agreement.
- Conduct initial needs assessment with families and develop stability plan.
- Collect demographic information on the families who participate in the program and determine social/emotional and academic needs of student.
- Utilize current staff to conduct pilot program that will focus on academics and socio-emotional support for students and case management, stability plan, and goal setting for parents/guardians.
 - Establish communication guidelines (when, how, by who) *no fewer than 1 contact every week to student.
- Require a weekly 1-hour tutoring session to each participant with a focus on ELA and math.
- Pilot coordinator will track participation for each participant. If attendance falls below expectations outlined in on page 2, and is not waived, pilot coordinator will inform Appleseed and Homeless liaison, before the start of the following month. If attendance is waived, the pilot coordinator will document the reasons why. This information will be shared with New Mexico Appleseed monthly.
- Ensure student completion of survey at beginning and end of pilot program.
- Assist Appleseed in arranging entrance and exit interviews with families.
- If students are on track to meet participation criteria as 30-day period is drawing to a close, pilot coordinator will contact families and ask how they would like Basic Needs Stipend to be allocated.
 - This information will be input into a shared google doc by the pilot coordinator and shared with Appleseed admin.
- Collect monthly receipts from families, if needed.
- Attend monthly check-in phone calls and to share data on pilot progress, including families' expenditures, survey results, attendance, academic achievement, with NM Appleseed.
- Conduct a district-wide outreach to identify any and all MKV eligible children.

Participating students will (with compassionate exceptions):

- Maintain a 90% or better school attendance rate.
- Turn in and complete 90% or more assignments (may also depend on funding for tutoring, if we want to eliminate barriers and set students up for success).
- Attend 90% of weekly check-in sessions designed to meet specific needs of students that target academic improvement and socio-emotional support.
- Complete required surveys.

Parents/guardians will:

- Participate in initial needs assessment and monthly case management sessions with McKinney-Vento staff.
- Participate in goal-setting and stability plan, including delineating the basic needs family needs financial assistance with.
- Submit original or photograph of receipts for gift cards.
- Participate in an entrance and exit interview and complete entrance and exit surveys. (Families will be compensated for their time for participating in interviews.)

I. BENCHMARKS

Table 1

Required Student Activities	Date for Completion
Students must participate in 90% of weekly check-ins with school district staff. Check-ins will cover the social-emotional issues, academic challenges, and basic needs of students throughout the school year.	Weekly meetings mid-November 2020 through mid-July 2021
Students must participate in 90% of weekly 1-hour tutoring sessions. The tutoring sessions will assist students with completing work and providing support and extra instruction on academic challenges the student may be experiencing.	One hour a week (school breaks excluded) mid-November 2020 through mid-July 2021
Student must complete 90% of school work and turn it in on time. (The method of submitting work in a timely fashion will vary from student to student.)	Mid-November 2020 through mid-July 2021
Completion of first survey.	November 2020
Completion of final survey.	July 2021

Table 2

Required Parent/Guardian Activities	Date for Completion
Participation in initial needs assessment and monthly case management sessions with McKinney-Vento staff.	Monthly meetings mid-November 2020 through mid-July 2021
Participation in goal-setting and stability plan, including delineating the basic needs family needs financial assistance with.	October-November 2020
If family opts for a gift card must submit a photograph or original receipt for how gift card was spent. All receipts from the prior month must be turned in before Basic Needs Stipend will be issued.	Mid-November 2020 through mid-July 2021
Phone or video entrance and exit interviews and entrance and exit and surveys. (Family will receive a gift card if they participate in the interviews.)	November 2020 and July 2021.

Attachment C

Data Collection and Sharing Agreement

Obtaining and sharing quality data for evaluation purposes is critical to the grant requirements. Appleseed and WLVSD will have monthly virtual meetings about how the pilot is going, troubleshoot any issues, and identify what technical and other assistance Appleseed can provide to your district. WLVSD will also share monthly data with Appleseed including on student attendance, work completion, family gift card expenditures, and any substantial disciplinary or other issues of students that affect their participation in the program (e.g. suspensions, expulsions, student stopped communicating with school or withdrew, and so forth). A sample data sharing form is included with this attachment. Most of this information must already be tracked for the pilot program and we will work together to make sure that it is collected and shared in the least burdensome way possible. Appleseed only needs to see de-identified and/or aggregate data, we do not need any individually identifiable information about students. Appleseed staff will also complete intake and exit interviews with families participating in the pilot. Families will be offered a \$50 gift card to compensate them for their time if they are willing to participate in the interview process.

Data to Collect for Pilot Evaluation

- **School Data**
 - Number of participants who start and complete the program, and their demographic information including housing situation, ages, race/ethnicity, and number of children.
 - Attendance rates of participants in program.
 - Completion rate of school work of participants in program.
 - Pre (to the extent possible) and one-year post-pilot academic metrics for participants and comparison group, including attendance at school, reading and math scores, grades, graduation rate, and other academic and engagement metrics.
 - Summary of needs assessment given to families in beginning of study.
- **Survey and interview data**
 - Results of initial and final surveys of students.
 - Summary of initial and final surveys of, which includes:
 - Number of parents who report the financial transfers provided stability for their family.
 - Number of parents who report the financial transfers helped their family prioritize academic engagement.
 - Notes from entrance and exit interviews with families.
- **Financial data**
 - Data on how the families chose to allocate the financial transfers, including originals or photos of receipts and/or the percentage who allocated the money towards housing.

Date:

Appendix C

School District's Data Sharing Spreadsheet

Grade	Student ID#	Demographics				Student completed monthly requirements (1-hour tutoring)	Student completed monthly requirements (90% attendance)	Received attendance exception (specify details in explanation tab)
		Race/Ethnicity	Current Housing Situation	Number of children in household	Current Age			

School District's Data Sharing Spreadsheet

Received assignment exception (specify details in explanation tab)	Parents participated in scheduled meetings	Q1 GPA	Q1 GPA	Q1 GPA	Q4 GPA	Student passed all classes (at end of Sem1). If answer is no, please provide detail.	Comments
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Appendix D

Participation Rates

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Total # of students on monthly roster	43	43	43	42	43	44	46
Number of students who completed monthly requirements	23 ⁵⁸	29	22	26	24	31	42
Number of students who received a stipend	41	42	39.5	41	40.5	43	42
Number of new students added into program	1	0	2	6	1	1	2
Number of students dropped from program	2	0	1	0	0	2	1
Number of students on pause warning⁵⁹	-	0	5	2	3	0	0
Number of students on pause	0	0	0	4	3	2	4
Number of students receiving requirement exception	0	11	4	10	4	10	N/A
Number of students passing all classes	10 ⁶⁰	22	22	19	13 ⁶¹	29	N/A

⁵⁸ No information provided for twenty students.

⁵⁹ During this phase students were issued half their stipend as either an incentive to re-engage or to acknowledge improved engagement even if it fell short of the pilot requirements, per the school staff discretion. For some youth this seemed to be an effective approach that felt supportive and non-punitive.

⁶⁰ No information provided for 20 students.

⁶¹ No information reported on 7 students.

Appendix E

Participant Demographics

Basic Needs Stipend Participants, Total = 55		
Race/Ethnicity		
	Native American	24 (47%)
	Hispanic	20 (39%)
	Caucasian/ White	7 (14%)
Current Housing Situation		
	Doubled-up	29 (57%)
	At-Risk	4 (8%)
	Substandard Housing	15 (29%)
	Shelter	1 (2%)
	Transitional Housing	2 (4%)
Children in Household ⁶²		
	Average Number	2
Age of participants		
	Average age	16
Grade level		
	9 th	18 (35%)
	10 th	8 (16%)
	11 th	13 (25%)
	12 th	15 (29%)

⁶² No information reported for nine students.

Surveys and Interview Questions
Initial survey for youth

Choices for each question: Often True, Sometimes True, Never True

- 1) Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.
- 2) Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.
- 3) In general, I enjoy school.
- 4) I believe receiving my high school diploma is possible for me.
- 5) When I'm feeling upset, stressed or having problems there are programs or services at my school that can help me.
- 6) When I'm feeling upset, stressed or having problems there is an adult in school who I can talk to about it.
- 7) Knowing that I have the opportunity to help financially support my family by participating in the pilot makes me feel proud.
- 8) I feel confident that I will be able to complete the requirements of the pilot.
- 9) If you are worried about meeting the requirements of the pilot, what part worries you? ___ Attending school ___ Attending the tutoring sessions ___ Attending the check-ins ___ Completing and turning in my work on time ___ Other (please describe) _____

Final Survey for Youth

This brief survey will help us understand some of what you may be experiencing now that the pilot has ended. The basic needs stipend refers to the money you earned each month. Please chose the best answer that best describes you. There are no right or wrong answers. This survey should take between 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All information collected in this survey will remain strictly confidential.

Please provide your school ID#. If you do not have your school ID# handy, please write in your full name:

Please mark an "x" for the answer that best represents your experience during the pilot program.

	True	Often True	Sometimes True	Never True	Not applicable
Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.					
Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.					
In general, I enjoy school.					
The basic needs stipend helped motivate me to attend school.					

The basic needs stipend helped motivate me to complete my schoolwork.					
The tutoring sessions helped motivate me to attend school.					
The tutoring sessions helped me complete my schoolwork.					
When I'm feeling upset, stressed or having problems there are programs or services at my school that can help me.					
When I'm feeling upset, stressed or having problems there is an adult in school who I can talk to about it.					
Did you have any problems meeting the program requirements (such as attending the tutoring sessions, check-ins, or turning in your work on time)?					

If you had any issues meeting the program requirements, please explain.

Any final comments about the pilot?

Initial survey for parents

- 1) Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.

Often True	Sometimes True	Never True
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- 2) Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.

Often True	Sometimes True	Never True
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- 3) Where do you sleep at night? Please check ALL the boxes for places you have slept over the past year.
 - a. Staying temporarily with friends, relatives or other people ("couch-surfing")
 - b. At a shelter
 - c. In transitional housing or an independent living program
 - d. At a motel or in a camper or 5th wheel
 - e. In a car, tent, park, bus or train station, abandoned building, shed, or other public place
 - f. In a house that does not have reliable electricity, heat, or running water
 - g. Other

- 4) Which of the following best describes your employment?
 - a. Full-time employee
 - b. Part-time employee
 - c. Seasonal employee
 - d. Retired

- e. Full-time student
- f. Part-time student
- g. Currently looking for work

- 5) What is your occupation? _____
- 6) I believe the basic needs stipend will help me meet the needs of my family.
 True False
- 7) I believe the basic needs stipend will help me prioritize helping my youth access school.
 True False
- 8) My family has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the following ways (check all that apply):
- a. Inability to pay rent
 - b. Inability to pay mortgage
 - c. Inability to pay property taxes
 - d. Have had trouble affording groceries or getting enough food to feed my family
 - e. Have had hours reduced at job
 - f. Lost job
 - g. Had to move in with family or friends due to financial circumstances
 - h. Have had difficulty with child care while I work
 - i. Have had difficulty helping my student with schoolwork
 - j. Have had difficulty helping my student access remote school
 - k. None of the above

Final Survey for Parent/Guardian/Independent Youth

This brief survey will help us understand some of what you may be experiencing now that the pilot has ended. Please chose the best answer that best describes you. There are no right or wrong answers. This survey may take between 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All information collected in this survey will remain strictly confidential.

Please enter your youth's student ID#, or if you are a youth living on your own without a parent or guardian, enter your school ID#. If you do not have your school ID, you may enter student's full name instead.

Who is filling out this survey? Please circle one.

- Parent
- Guardian
- Youth living independently

	True	Often True	Sometimes True	Never True	N/A
Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.					
Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.					

Please check ALL for places you have slept over the past year. (References to parents are for youth living independently only)

Where do you sleep at night?	Please enter an "x" if true.
Staying temporarily with friends, relatives or other people ("couch-surfing") WITH a parent	
Staying temporarily with friends, relatives or other people ("couch-surfing") NOT with a parent	
At a shelter, WITH a parent	
At a shelter, NOT with a parent	
In transitional housing or an independent living program, WITH a parent	
In transitional housing or an independent living program, NOT with a parent	
At a motel or in a camper or 5th wheel, WITH a parent	
At a motel or in a camper or 5th wheel, NOT with a parent	
In a car, tent, park, bus or train station, abandoned building, shed, or other public place, WITH a parent	
In a car, tent, park, bus or train station, abandoned building, shed, or other public place, NOT with a parent	
At home in my bed	

If you are employed, what is your occupation?

	True	Often True	Sometimes True	Never True	Not applicable
The stipend helped us meet our family's basic needs (such as housing costs, food, and transportation).					
The stipend helped us prioritize school for our student.					

Do you have any additional comments about your experience with the pilot?

Initial Interview: Parents

1. What is your understanding of this pilot program?
2. Do you see any challenges to fulfilling the program requirements? If so, what?
3. What are you most looking forward to while participating in this pilot?
4. How do you think your student is doing in school right now?
5. Do you know what kind of grades your student is earning?
6. Is there anything about participating in the pilot that worries you?
7. What do you hope to get out of this pilot project?
8. Do you feel like you have the support you need to ensure your student is successful in this program? If not, what can we do to help?
9. Do you know who to reach out to if you have any problems or questions during this pilot program?

Exit Interview: Parents

1. At any point during this pilot, did you worry about your student meeting the requirements? If so, please explain?
2. Were stipend requirements (attend school, tutoring, and check-ins) helpful for your student? If helpful, why? If not, what could have been done differently?
3. Do you think this pilot had any impact on your youth's relationships with school staff? If so, how?
4. Did you need to contact the school for any reason during this pilot?
5. If so, what was the main reason for contacting the school?
6. Did you receive the support you needed to your satisfaction?
7. If not, what could have been done differently?
8. Did the pilot program have any impact on the way your student focused on school? Why or why not?
9. Do you think the pilot program had any impact (good or bad) on your student's overall grades? Why or why not?
10. Do you think this pilot had any impact (good or bad) on your youth's feelings about school? If so, how?
11. Thinking about the monthly stipend, what would you say was the most helpful thing that your family spent the money on?
12. Do you think this type of program could be helpful to other families? Why or why not?
13. What is one thing you would like to see changed in this pilot?
14. Any final comments?

Exit Interview: Students

1. Why did you choose to participate in this program?
2. Did you have any problems in completing the program requirements (tutor sessions, check-in, attending school)? If so, what sort of problems did you have?
3. Were the tutor sessions helpful? Why or why not?
4. Were the counseling sessions helpful? Why or why not?
5. Were attendance requirements fair? Why or why not?
6. Were homework requirements fair? Why or why not?
7. Did your relationships with school staff change in anyway during the program? If so, how?

8. Did the monthly stipend help motivate you to focus on school? If so how? If not, was there something else that might have helped motivate you?
9. Do you think you would have earned the same grades without the support you received in the pilot? Why or why not?
10. Overall, did you enjoy participating in this pilot? Why or why not?
11. Would you recommend this program to other kids? Why or why not?
12. If there was one (or more) thing(s) you could have changed about this pilot, what would it be?
13. Do you have any final comments about your experience with this pilot?

Exit Interview: Teachers/Tutors/Staff

1. Did you know the students before this pilot program?
2. If so, please describe your relationship.
3. Did you notice students having problems completing the program requirements?
4. If so, what sort of problems did they have?
5. Did you notice any changes in students' engagement in school while participating in the program?
6. Did you think this program had any impact on participants grades? For example, do you think participants would have performed the same without this pilot?
7. Did you think the monthly stipend was motivating for the students?
8. What might have been offered that would have been more motivating?
9. Did you think the stipends benefited families? If so, how? If not, what recommendations do you have that could have supported families better?
10. How could we have made this pilot better for the students, families, and school staff?
11. Do you have any final comments about your experience with this pilot that you would like us to share with funders?