

COMMUNITY  
EDUCATION  
PARTNERSHIPS

# 2020 IMPACT REPORT

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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ERICA MOHAN



There's an old saying that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it certainly takes a community of partners to help youth break out of intergenerational poverty and support their academic success. Community Education Partnerships (CEP) is proud to be a crucial stakeholder for homeless and highly mobile youth who need a dedicated educational partner to foster academic opportunities and upward mobility. We could not do it alone. At the core of what we do, we recognize that partnership with students, families, shelters, donors, and other community stakeholders is critical.

I am proud of what we have accomplished over the past 10 years, and throughout this report you will learn about the persistent need for our programs, and hopefully be inspired to become one of our essential partners.

First, I would like to share some of the inspiration behind CEP. In many ways, my journey to build CEP began thirteen years ago when I started working with Ryan, a 9 year old boy in Los Angeles, California. When I met Ryan, he, his dad, and his brother were living in a family shelter. Ryan was behind in reading, writing, and math but was very eager to work hard and learn. By the time I left to move back to Northern California three years later, Ryan was performing at or above grade level in all subjects, was graduating 5th grade with high grades, and was identified by his teacher as a leader among his peers. Ryan struggled in high

school with family and personal issues and had a hard time focusing on his studies. He was eventually placed at a continuation high school where his teachers' attention and high expectations inspired him. Despite facing challenges, Ryan completed his senior year with a 3.8 GPA and perfect attendance. Undoubtedly, his path through school was circuitous with academic and personal ups and downs, filled with challenges that no child should face. Ryan, however, persevered and I could not be prouder of him.

As if it is not hard enough in normal circumstances for children to navigate and succeed in our complicated world, homeless and highly mobile (HHM) students, disproportionately Black, Indigenous and Other People of Color (BIPOC),<sup>1</sup> are uniquely burdened with challenges that undermine their learning trajectory in school. I sought to create a support system for other students like Ryan who have all the potential, but lack the resources and relationships they need to succeed.

CEP has stepped in with urgency to support the development of HHM students' social-emotional, executive function, and academic skills that are compromised as a result of their unconscionable circumstances.

Homelessness, even short periods of it, can have devastating consequences on academic success. That is why I am proud of the impact we are having on our students, and hope that you will be motivated to partner with us.

Sincerely,

**Erica Mohan**  
 Founder and Executive Director,  
 CEP

# INTRODUCTION: HOMELESS AND HIGHLY MOBILE STUDENTS

## WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?

Over 260,000<sup>2</sup> or four percent<sup>3</sup> of all students in California reported being homeless in 2018, the unfortunate result of factors such as high rents, job losses, evictions, health crises, or a family separation or divorce.<sup>4</sup> This is more than twice the national rate<sup>5</sup> of student homelessness. In the Bay Area alone, there are at least 15,000 homeless students. These students are living on the streets, in cars, motels, shelters, or “doubling up” in shared living spaces with friends or family, often cycling through many different living situations during the course of a single year.<sup>6</sup> The coronavirus pandemic is expected to push even more families into poverty and out onto the streets as unemployment levels reach historic highs.

## HHM YOUTH STRUGGLE ACADEMICALLY

The challenges of daily life make it difficult for HHM youth to regularly attend and succeed in school. As a result of their unique challenges, HHM students nationwide perform substantially below grade level in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. In California, the range of scores skews lower than the national averages, and are half the proficiency rates achieved by housed peers. Further, students who experienced homelessness at some point in their early education were more likely than their housed peers to see their academic performance suffer in later years.<sup>9</sup>



formerly homeless youth said that it was hard to stay in school while they were homeless.



said that they had at one or more points dropped out of school.



said it was hard to succeed and do well in school during their homelessness.<sup>8</sup>



Loud, chaotic, unstable living situations, often with concurrent food insecurity



### LEADS TO...

- Inadequate sleep
- Lack of study routine and space
- Lack of home-school connection
- High stress
- A mind not ready to learn
- Frequent school transfers



### WHICH RESULTS IN...

- Higher absenteeism
- Interrupted access to educational tools such as school supplies and books
- Inconsistent, insufficient school support services

## CEP'S RESPONSE

The profound and disruptive impact on a child's education of unmet basic physical and psychological needs, such as stable housing, calls for intensive, targeted interventions, yet California receives one of the lowest per-pupil levels of federal educational support in the United States, even with its outsized need.<sup>10</sup> It has become the role of community-based organizations, then, to fill the gaps.<sup>11</sup> CEP is rising to the challenge to step in where our systems have failed, with a mission to meet HHM students where they are to increase learning opportunities and enhance their academic achievement.

Since its inception, CEP has provided educational support to over 1,000 homeless children, and has distributed more than 4,000 books and 750 backpacks filled with school supplies to HHM students in the Bay Area.

CEP's approach is holistic. Its programs help families navigate through a challenging system while also nurturing the individual needs of each student.



**CEP rises to the challenge, stepping in where our systems have failed. We meet HHM students where they are with dedicated support and learning opportunities to enhance their academic achievement.**

## CEP'S APPROACH

### Providing necessary support for academic success

- Weekly one-hour 1:1 sessions with a tutor/mentor
- Afterschool Homework Clubs
- Literacy Club
- Summer Reading Club
- Computer Club
- Family Reading Nights
- Back to School Nights

### Connecting students to resources

- Backpacks with school supplies
- Personalized book distribution
- Chromebook and wifi distribution

### Ensuring that the basic needs of its students are met

- Partnerships with school districts, shelters, healthcare providers and libraries
- Household supplies distribution

# CEP'S PROGRAMS HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED

## THE PROBLEM

One of the biggest issues faced by CEP's students is the need for consistent, trusted adults to help them navigate the challenges of school and the added hardships of homelessness. Many HHM parents and caregivers spend the majority of their time meeting the basic needs, such as food, shelter, and other necessities for their children. As a result of the immense pressures, caregivers are more likely to experience mental health issues, substance issues, domestic violence, and poor health, which can further deplete their resources.<sup>12</sup> The sources of support that other youth turn to in times of trouble – teachers, school counselors, coaches, family friends or religious leaders – disappear when a child is constantly moving. HHM youth rarely benefit from these types of deep, nurturing relationships because of their life circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

The heart of CEP's model is to offer relationship-centered programming that follows students wherever they go. CEP creates long-term, one-to-one mentor-student relationships that foster social and emotional development, improve executive functioning, and ultimately result in stronger academic performance for HHM.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH

Experiences of homelessness and housing instability in early childhood are highly damaging and associated with sometimes permanent deficits in children's language, literacy, and social-emotional development.<sup>14</sup> One promising strategy for closing the marked opportunity gaps observed for HHM youth is offering early intervention programs that develop their executive function skills.<sup>15</sup> Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember, and juggle multiple tasks—skills that are crucial for learning and development.<sup>16</sup>

Fortunately, executive function skills show considerable malleability through high-quality early childhood education programs and have also been proven, in particular, to have unique predictive significance for homeless children.<sup>17</sup> One study found that children who had better executive function skills performed better in kindergarten or first grade with respect to academic achievement, peer acceptance, and prosocial behavior while simultaneously experiencing fewer instances of impulsivity, inattention, aggression, or noncompliance.<sup>18</sup>

**CEP supports early childhood education by providing free high quality books to young children and partners with local librarians to educate and support parents on the important impact of reading out loud on brain development.**



## SCHOOL AGE RESEARCH

Studies also demonstrate that consistent mentorship and tutoring programs like CEP's can result in several social-emotional benefits for at-risk youth, which often translate into academic gains.<sup>19,20</sup>

### 1

#### SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

- Mentoring programs like CEP's enable students to have:
  - A greater **liking of school**,
  - **Better behavior** in the **classroom**,
  - **Better behavior** with their **peers**, and
  - **Increased self-esteem**
- Further, the results extend beyond the classroom and have been shown to have:
  - Decreasing **alcohol and drug use**
  - Improving **parent/child relationship**<sup>20,21</sup>



- As a learning center for homeless and highly mobile youth, CEP's programs have been shown to:
  - Improve **school attendance**
  - Improve **math and reading proficiency**
  - Increase **homework** completion
  - Increase **participation and engagement** in class
- Further, a study examining the impact of "at-risk" youth found that youth with mentors made **significantly higher academic gains in reading and math** compared to those without mentors<sup>20,21</sup>

### 2

#### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

“

Shawn has done a complete 180 in regards to school. Before starting with CEP, he wasn't regularly attending classes, was refusing to write, and rarely did his homework. Since starting with his tutor, **all aspects have improved** and he's now writing a science fiction novel with the help of his tutor, who also loves science fiction. She has inspired him to start writing, something he would never do for school or for himself before. Now he spends 2-3 hours per day working on his novel while still attending his classes and turning in his homework.

- Mother of CEP student, Shawn

“

CEP takes a relationship first approach to serving their students and families. They know what their needs are and who they are. They are about the people. It's very human-centered.

- Maggie, CEP Volunteer





“

*CEP is the only group that comes regularly, twice a week, versus others who come once a month. CEP is the most regular presence onsite for the kids. CEP created a culture for the kids; outside of CEP, we haven't had a consistent program onsite. They create a welcoming atmosphere. There's something for the kids and they don't feel forgotten. When mothers are struggling through transition, the kids usually have it the hardest. The kids feel seen with CEP.*

*- Emily, Supervisor at Bay Area Rescue Mission*

“

*I love that this program follows my child wherever we are and that my daughter gets to stay with her tutor even after we've left a shelter.*

*- Mother of a 9th Grade CEP Student*

“

*One thing that really sets CEP apart is its commitment to its students and the relationship. In the beginning of tutoring, many students tend to question how committed their CEP tutor is to them. Their attitudes shift when they feel prioritized. When tutors show up for a student on a consistent basis, it positively influences how they feel about their academic potential.*

*- Sonali, CEP Board Member & Volunteer*

92%

## CEP Parents/Caregivers Say CEP Has Helped Their Child to Succeed<sup>23</sup>



**My child is independently spending more time on math, reading and homework**



**My child is turning in their homework in a more timely manner**



**My child has improved academically**

## CEP'S SOLUTION

CEP is an **innovative mobile learning resource that meets kids where they are**—helping to alleviate the inherent challenge of mobility. CEP meets its families wherever they can, be it at McDonalds, a library, or at the shelter they live in, and the relationship does not end just because a student moves out of the shelter or to a new school district.

Further, CEP's long-term, one-on-one mentorship relationships cultivate strong bonds between the youth and their mentors—who often develop into the kind of role models and figures of consistency, stability, and inspiration that tend to be lacking in HHM students' chaotic lives. This, as the research shows, plays a significant role in helping improve **meaningful relationships**, which are often incredibly challenging for homeless and highly mobile children to foster, and which play a significant role in helping to improve their social-emotional skills, executive function, and academic performance.

## CEP'S IMPACT IN 2019

During 2019, Community Education Partnerships' volunteers provided over 3,500 hours of one-on-one tutoring to 180 students (resulting in over 220 interactions with homeless and highly mobile youth each week). 20% of CEP's active students have been working with CEP mentors for over three years, and 50% have been working with CEP mentors for at least a year. These relationships have yielded positive results: over 90% of CEP parents/caregivers surveyed reported that their children's attitudes about school and homework have improved as a result of working with their tutors.<sup>24</sup>

CEP also hosted 850 hours of group events and activities (Family Reading Nights, Back to School Nights, Summer Reading Clubs, among others) and distributed 1000 books, including 250 books to the youngest children in shelters. All of these activities contributed toward increased social and emotional development, executive function, and academic performance of CEP students.

- 3,500** hours of one-on-one tutoring provided by CEP volunteers
- 180** students receiving one-on-one tutoring
- 220** interactions each week with homeless and highly mobile youth
- 20%** students working with CEP mentors for over 3 years
- 50%** students working with CEP mentors for at least 1 year
- 850** hours of group events and activities hosted by CEP
- 1,000** books distributed to homeless and highly mobile families



“

*Before starting to work with his tutor, Jay would get frustrated and give up if he didn't know how to do something right away. After working with his tutor Jay now takes a different approach and tries to figure it out. CEP has helped Jay build his confidence in learning and asking for help. Jay gets excited when he understands something, and now he is more engaged because he doesn't feel alone in his learning.*

- Mother of CEP student, Jay

“

*Sienna loves working with her tutor Jessica. Jessica makes learning fun in an engaging and calm way. She inspires Sienna to try new things and celebrates with her when she gets a new concept. Jessica knows how to keep Sienna's attention and make the sessions feel inviting. She maintains consistent communication with Sienna's teachers, ensuring that Sienna stays on track. Sienna is willing to do her work independently and loves showing off what she has learned. Jessica has created a system that rewards hard work and effort and emphasizes learning.*

- Mother of CEP student, Sienna

# CEP'S PROGRAMS HELP FIGHT THE EFFECTS OF INEQUALITY AND SYSTEMIC RACISM

## THE PROBLEM

CEP's students face the dual challenges of homelessness and systemic racism. Approximately 90% of the students CEP serves are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and Other People of Color). BIPOC youth are dramatically more likely to become homeless. In 2018, more than half of the homeless population was Black,<sup>25</sup> nearly three times their representation in the US population.<sup>26</sup> Poverty, hunger, discrimination, and trauma contribute to the increased rate of homelessness amongst Black people. However, what concerns CEP most is that the school systems aren't equipped to provide HHM and BIPOC students with the support they need to succeed.<sup>27</sup>

## THE RESEARCH

There is ample research documenting the effects of systemic racism on BIPOC and HHM youth in schools.

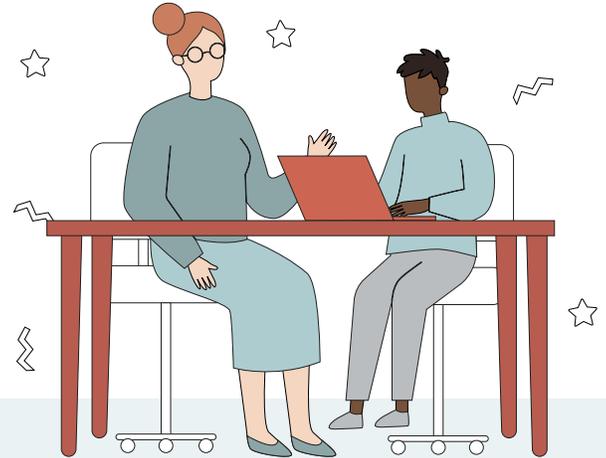
- Black three and four year olds are suspended more than their white counterparts and this disproportionate rate of suspension continues through high school.<sup>28</sup>
- More than 72 percent of Hispanic and 79 percent of Black 4th and 8th grade public school students were not proficient in reading or math in 2019.<sup>29</sup>
- A child who experiences homelessness is 87% more likely to drop out of school.<sup>30</sup>
- High school graduation rates are much lower for BIPOC students than their white counterparts.<sup>31</sup>

**Children who are denied equitable educational opportunities face lifelong challenges.**



## THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND COVID-19

COVID-19 has hit HHM and BIPOC youth hard. When the schools closed, many of CEP's students did not have the devices or the internet access necessary to engage in distance learning. Many families also needed technical support in learning how to access Zoom and Google Classrooms. During the early onset of COVID-19, CEP rallied and quickly provided its students with devices, internet access, and the support they needed to transition to online learning. CEP is committed to continuing to devote staff and volunteer hours to ensure that its students will have the means to enjoy their basic right to an education.



## CEP'S SOLUTION

CEP offers solutions that focus on the here and now and on the unique needs of individual students. By providing one-on-one support and consistent, caring relationships, CEP supports its students in overcoming the barriers they face and helps them get the best education possible despite the educational injustices they face every day.

The educational inequities faced by BIPOC and HHM youth are complex, deeply rooted, and will require a variety of interventions over a sustained period of time. **CEP brings solutions and hope to students and families facing systemic racism today.**



CEP tutors rose to the challenge to support middle schoolers in an East Oakland school. The school went an entire year (2019-2020) without an 8th grade math, science, or PE teacher and left CEP students struggling to prepare for high school. That school serves a student population that is over 90% Black and Latino.



CEP provides tutoring to Black boys from the OK Program, which has touched the lives of thousands of African-American males from the ages of 12 to 18 in order to reverse the high rates of homicides and incarceration among that population.

“

*I volunteered with a program that serves young Black boys at the highest risk from highly mobile/unstable home environments and behind in school. It was initially difficult to connect with James even though I came from a similar background and was also from East Oakland. James made progress as I continued to show up and advocate for him. His attitude changed and he got excited when we completed assignments. He started to realize his potential. It was exciting for both of us.*

- Sarah, CEP Board Member & Volunteer

“

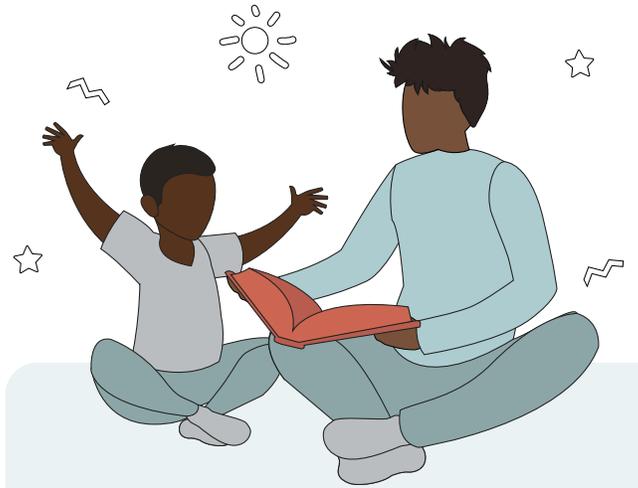
*CEP was born from a recognition of the inequities and injustices in our systems of housing and education for BIPOC students. We're here to support them emotionally and academically. We believe that education is a path out of the homelessness and intergenerational poverty our students experience.*

- Erica Mohan, CEP Founder and Executive Director

## CEP's programs tackle systemic racism by:

-  **Engaging families and other caregivers in partnerships to support their child's education, countering the effects of intergenerational poverty, exclusion, and systemic racism.**
-  **Rejecting deficit thinking and supporting all students in their quest for academic success, countering the negative racial stereotypes they may encounter.**
-  **Involving students in decision making and goal setting to foster agency and empowerment.**
-  **Using trauma-informed practices to help counter the effects of both individual and systemic trauma.**

**Despite the many systemic challenges students face, CEP sees transformative change in the students and families it serves.**



“

*Addressing gaps in education and supporting youth is one of the most important ways that we can break cyclical poverty.*

*- Maggie, CEP Volunteer Tutor*

“

*CEP is committed to empowering our students, the vast majority of whom identify as BIPOC, and fostering in them a lifelong love of reading. We're dedicated to ensuring our students, especially our BIPOC students, have access to books that center their voices and experiences in positive and affirming ways. Too often, students go through an entire school year without reading a single story featuring a main character who looks like them. Despite what the world tells them, our students are capable of achieving anything they dream of and we are proud to provide them with stories and books that feature characters with whom they can identify, having adventures, achieving their goals, and changing the world.*

*- Beth Miller, CEP's Program Director*



# CONCLUSION

## THE PROBLEM IS CLEAR

California youth disproportionately experience housing insecurity and homelessness.

These HHM students often encounter a multitude of life challenges, including barriers to academic success, social and emotional stress, racial discrimination, and food insecurity. Ultimately, HHM youth, who are disproportionately BIPOC, are more at risk of intergenerational poverty, and future housing insecurity and homelessness. They need dedicated advocates, resources, and partners who are committed to their academic success. CEP fills a much needed void for these students through its relationship-based approach to tutoring and mentoring. CEP embodies a participatory and people-centered approach to serving its students, so that its solutions are tailored to the unique needs of HHM youth.

Where many of our traditional systems have failed, CEP rises to the challenge. Its dedicated team of volunteers meets HHM students where they are, reducing the strain of transportation needs and enabling a relationship that can be stable and consistent. Through partnering with community stakeholders, including shelters, parents, and the students themselves, CEP enhances academic achievement and learning opportunities for under-resourced and immensely deserving youth.



**CEP enhances  
academic  
achievement and  
learning opportunities  
for under-resourced  
and immensely  
deserving youth.**

# REFERENCES

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This report was a joint project between CEP and the [Full Circle Fund \(FCF\)](#) who provided a grant and a team of professionals to create the impact report. FCF is a community that leverages resources and accelerates nonprofits to build a better Bay Area.

**We believe:**

**Everyone has  
the right to a  
high-quality  
education**

**CEP's mission is to  
increase the learning  
opportunities and  
enhance the academic  
achievement of  
homeless and highly  
mobile youth.**

**Homelessness  
should not  
be an obstacle  
to learning**

**Education can  
serve as a way  
out of poverty**

**Learning is  
empowering**



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