



# Why Student Homelessness Matters

## Supporting Stability & Academic Success

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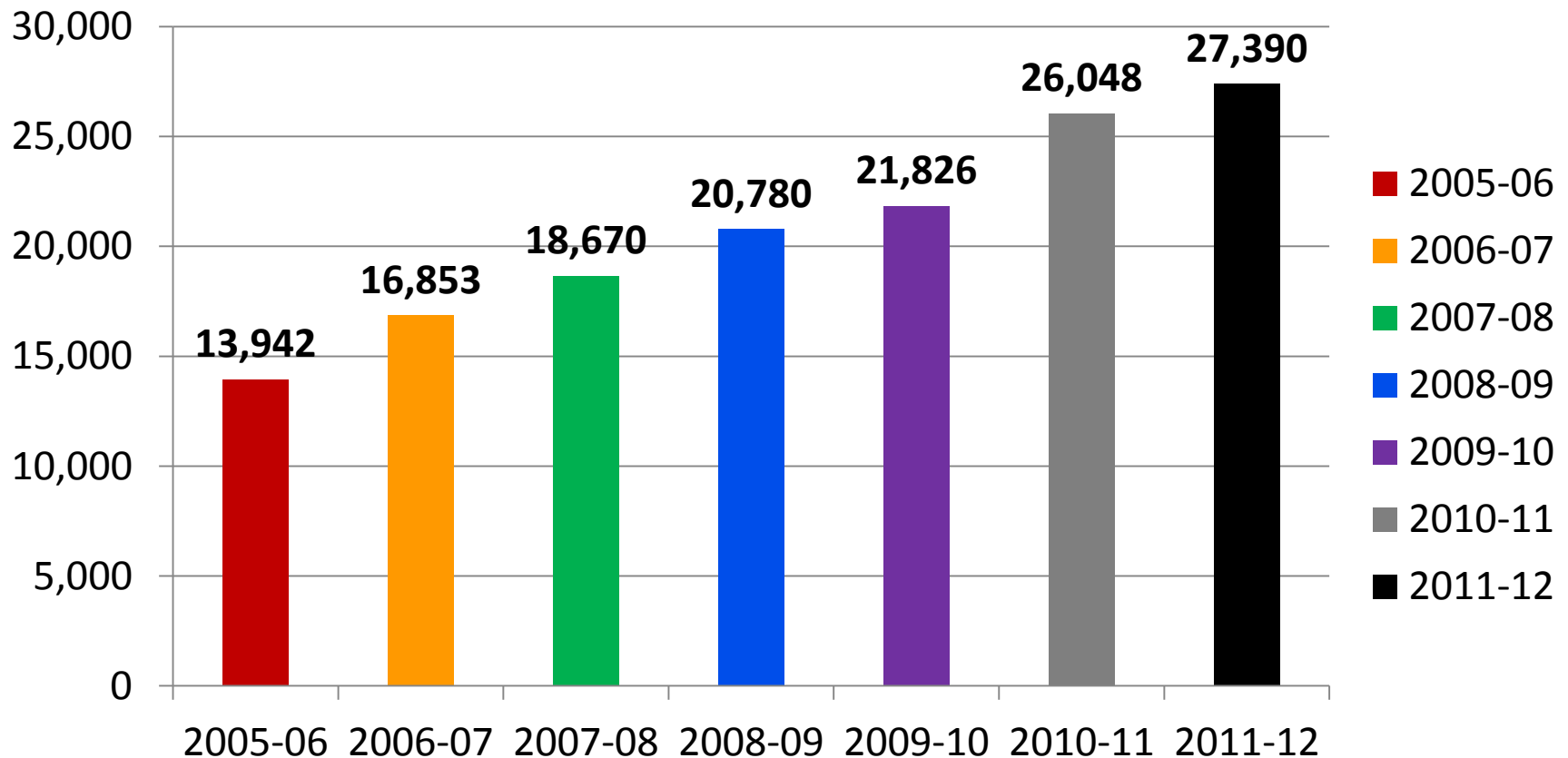
# Causes of Student Homelessness



- Lack of affordable housing
- Severe poverty
- Health problems and costs
- Discrimination
- Domestic violence
- Natural and other disasters
- Abuse/neglect (unaccompanied youth)
- Criminal records screening

# Who are the children and youth experiencing homelessness?

**Washington State Students Identified as McKinney-Vento Eligible**



# Problem: Under Identification



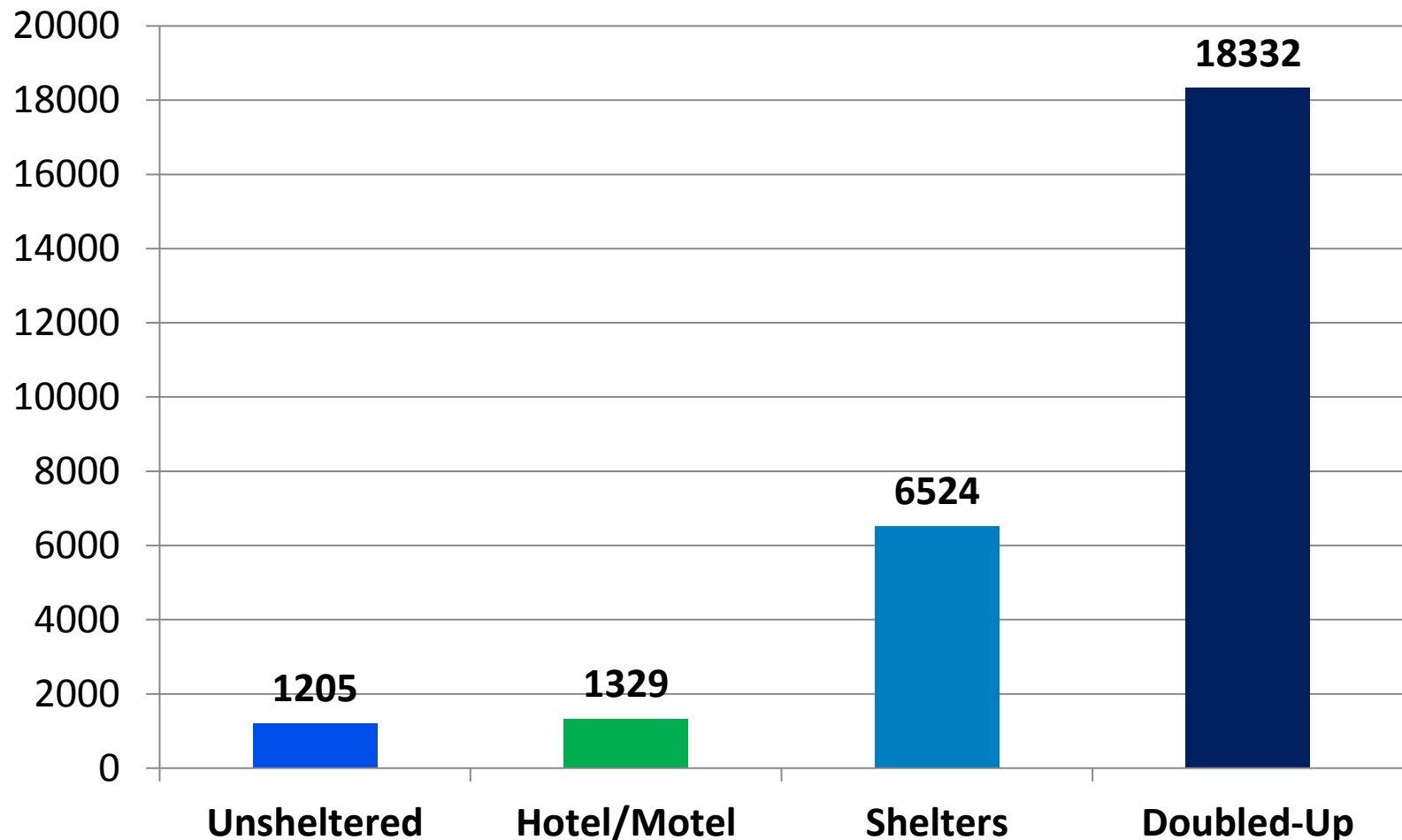
There may be 10,000 students unidentified by their school districts. Approximately 6,454 homeless students may be unaccompanied youth.

## **Why do these students remain unidentified?**

- There is 1 FTE at OSPI responsible for carrying out statewide education policies related to homeless students.
- All homeless liaisons are not required to attend mandatory state training.
- Only a small number of district-level staff are trained on McKinney-Vento requirements.
- Many homeless students hide their housing status from fellow students, teachers, and staff.

# Who are the children and youth experiencing homelessness?

**Homeless Students by Housing Status**



# Problem: Limited Housing Options



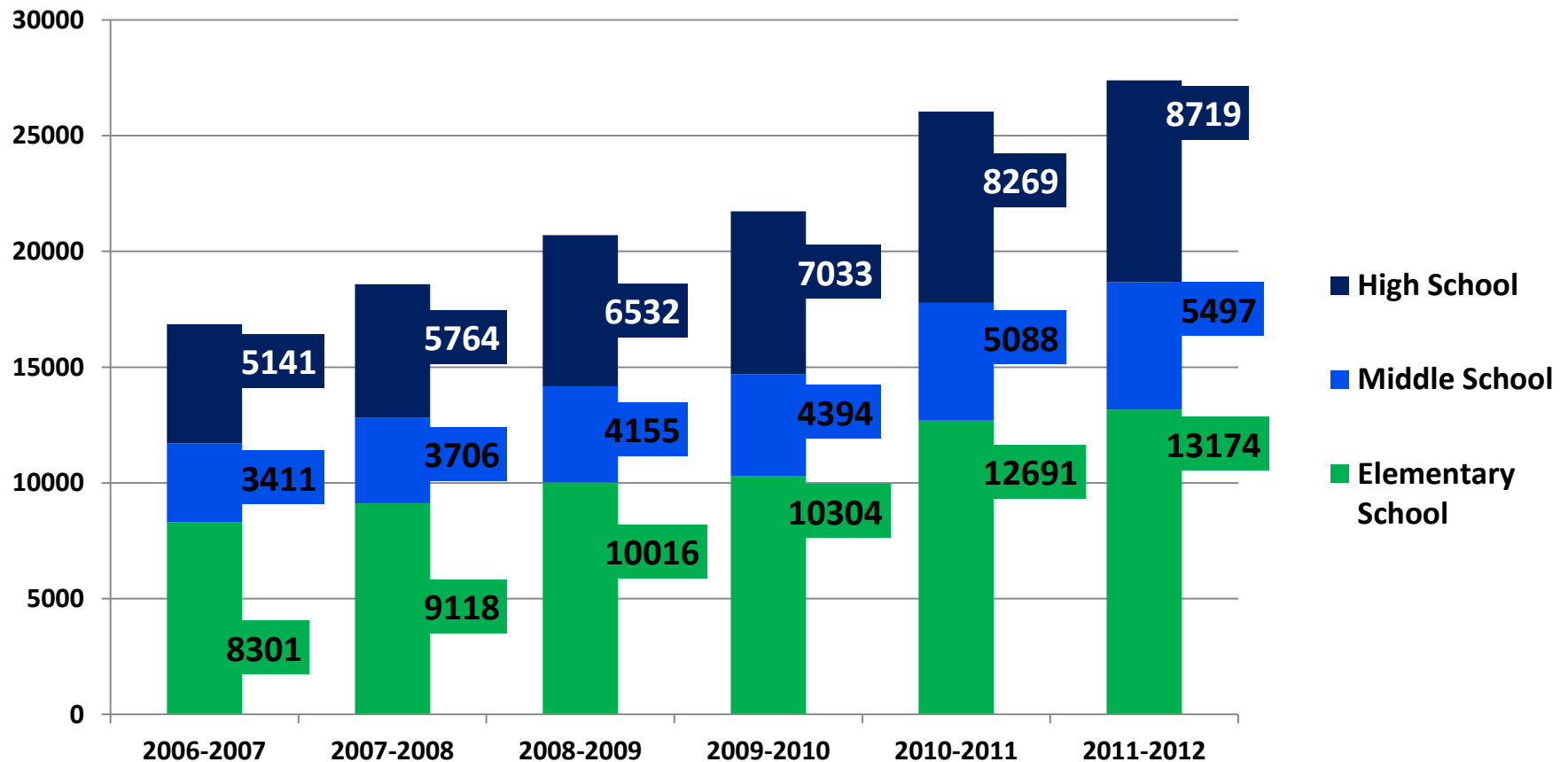
In 2011, in Washington State, for every 100 extremely low income households, there were 27 affordable and available units. And for every 100 very low-income households, there were 55 affordable and available units.

## **How does this impact homeless students?**

- Providing safe and consistent shelter is a critical strategy for ensuring students' education success.
- Homeless students who cannot find housing or shelter near their school of origin are often required to relocate far from their school of origin.
- Many homeless children lack a reasonable environment in which to do their homework.

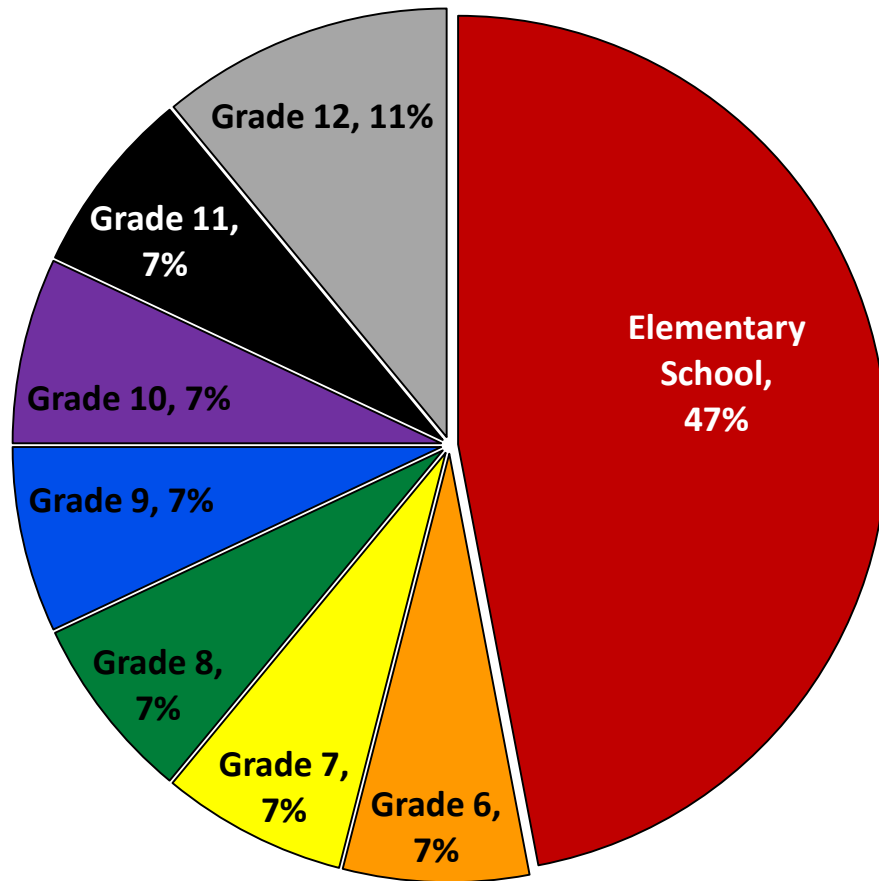
# Who are the children and youth experiencing homelessness?

Homeless Students By School Level

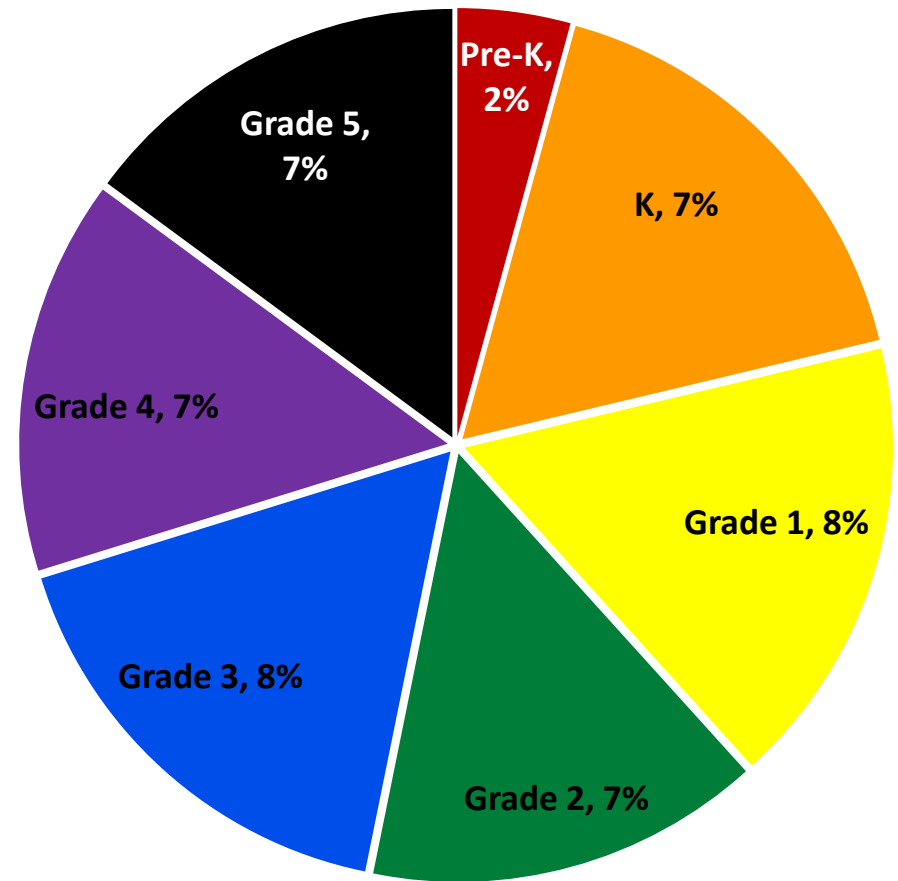


# Who are the children and youth experiencing homelessness?

All Grade Levels



Pre-K – Grade 5





# Problem: Instability of Homelessness



Children experiencing homelessness often feel like outsiders and have difficulty maintaining friendships due to frequent moves. Their lives feel out of control, and they often experience anxiety and depression as a result.

## How do many students experience homelessness?

- **Living with strangers**
  - In strange house/room/bed
  - Different rules/routine
  - No privacy, concerns about safety
  - Families often become separated
  - Often overcrowded, unsanitary
- **Severe poverty**
  - Few or no possessions
  - Poor health, nutrition, health care
- **Uncertainty about future**
  - Where will I sleep tonight?
  - Will we find a home?

# Problem: Barriers to Education

Homeless children show lower levels of reading, spelling, math, and science achievement compared with groups of low-income, housed peers.

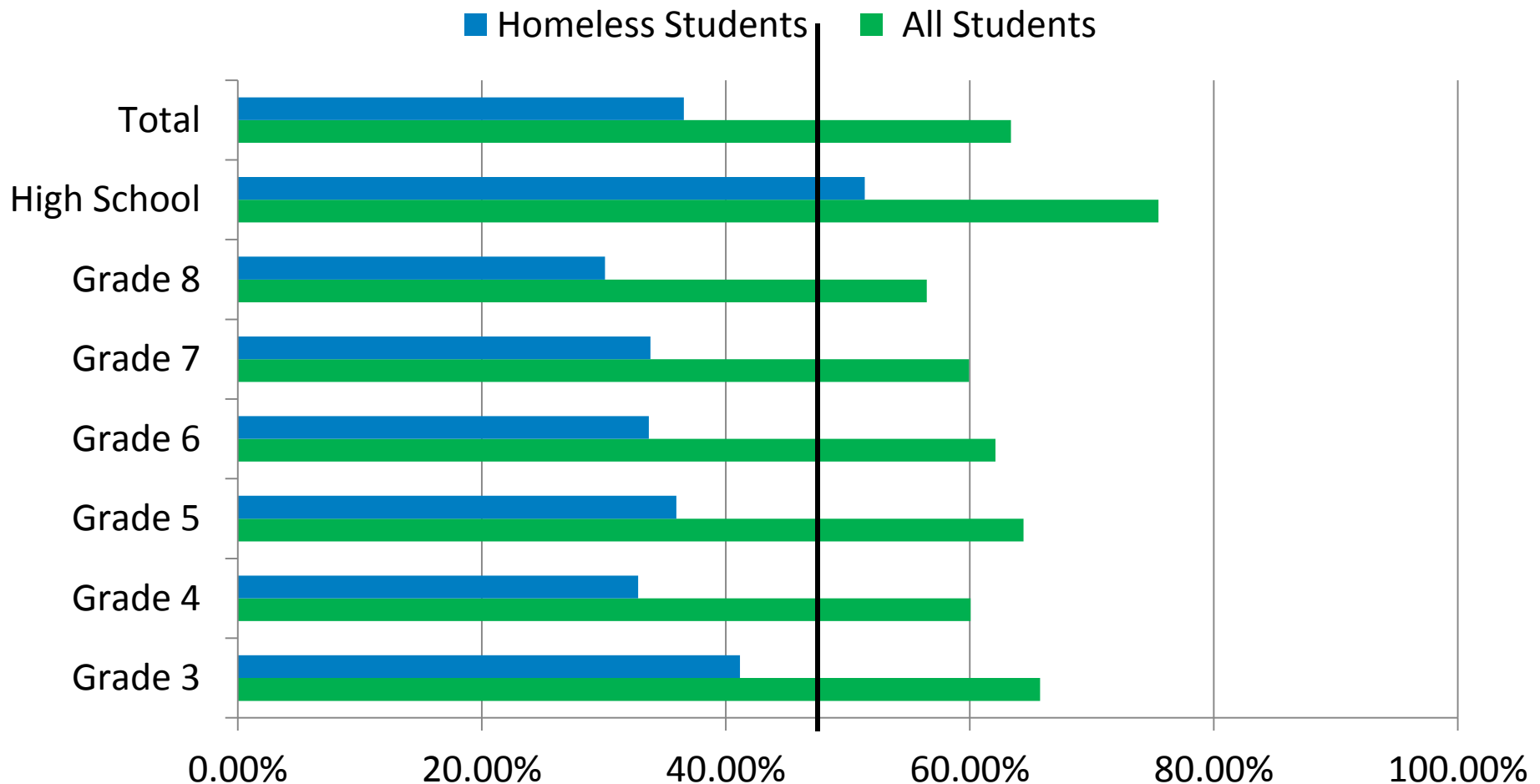
## What are these barriers?

- Enrollment requirements (school records, immunizations, proof of residence and guardianship).
- High mobility resulting in lack of school stability and educational continuity.
- Lack of transportation.
- Lack of awareness (school personnel).
- Poor health, fatigue, hunger.
- Trauma and mental health issues.
- Bias, stigma, and misunderstanding.



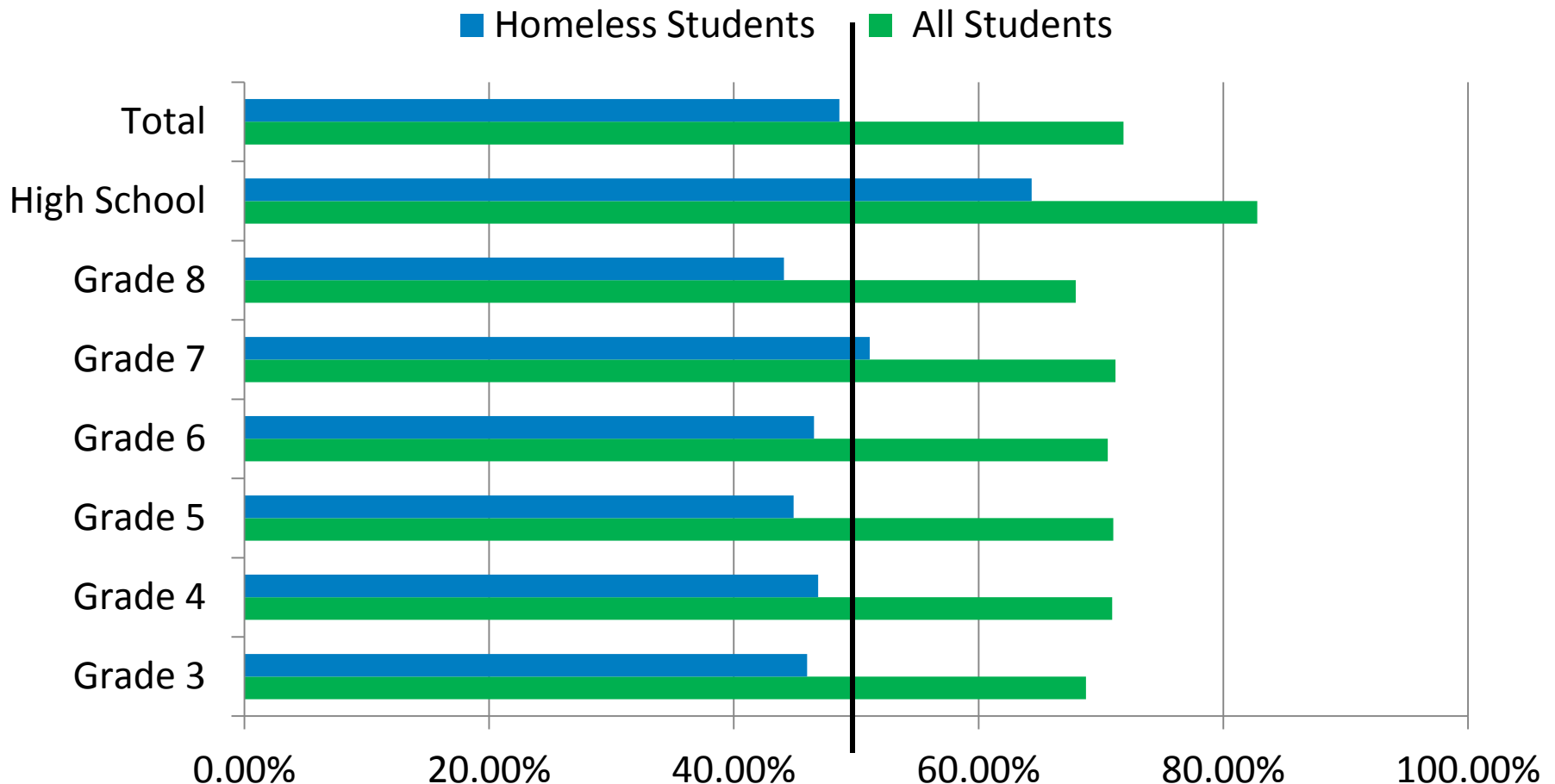
# What are the educational experiences of students in homeless situations?

Washington State Math Proficiency Data



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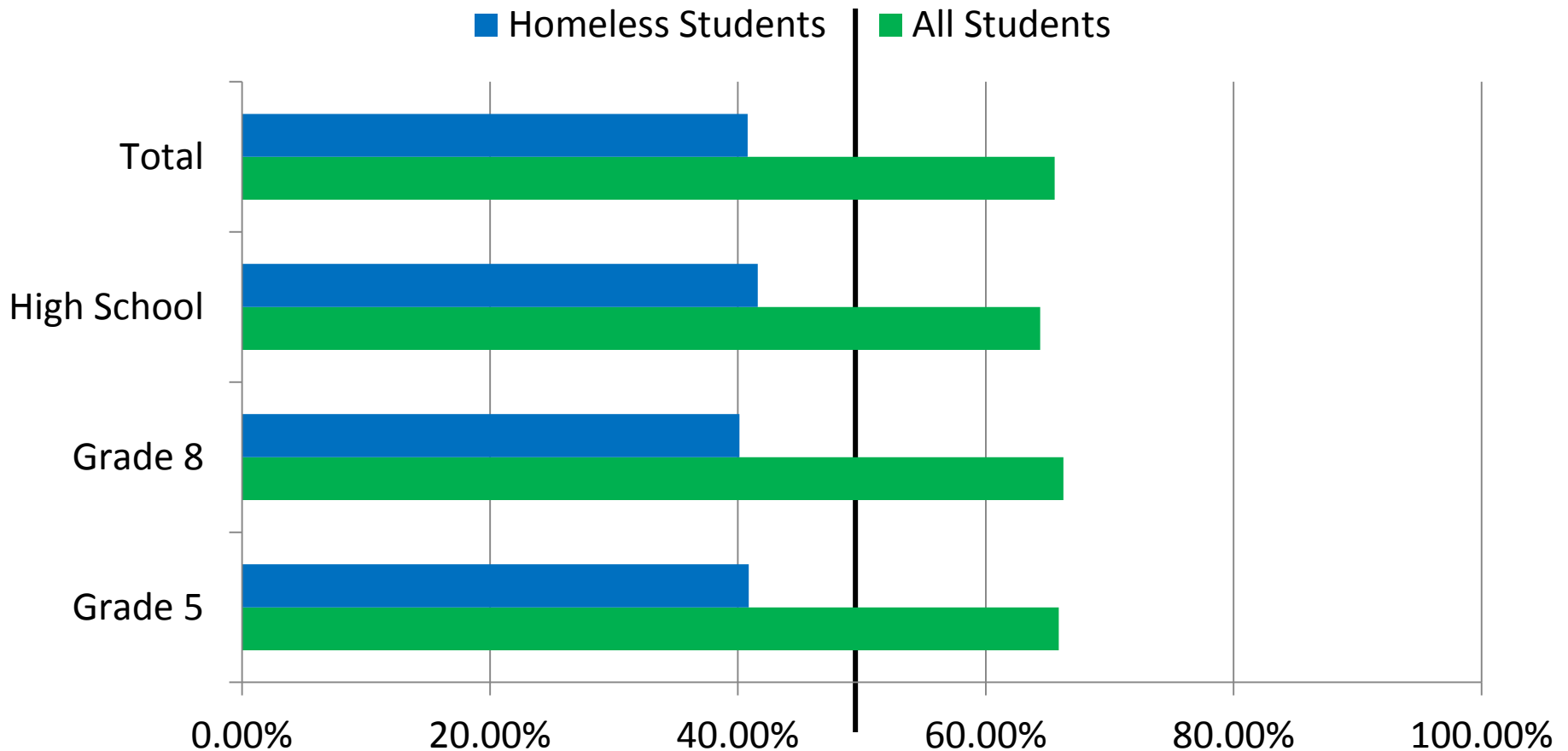
Washington State Reading Proficiency Data



# What are the educational experiences of students in homeless situations?



**Washington State Science Proficiency Data**



# What are the educational experiences of students in homeless situations?



- 40% of homeless children attend 2 different schools per school year; 28% of homeless children attend 3 or more different schools.
- With each change in schools, a student is set back academically by an average of four to six months.
- Homeless children are four times more likely to have delayed development and twice as likely to have learning disabilities, yet are significantly less likely to receive needed special education services.
- 1/3 of homeless students will repeat a grade.

# Why School Stability Matters

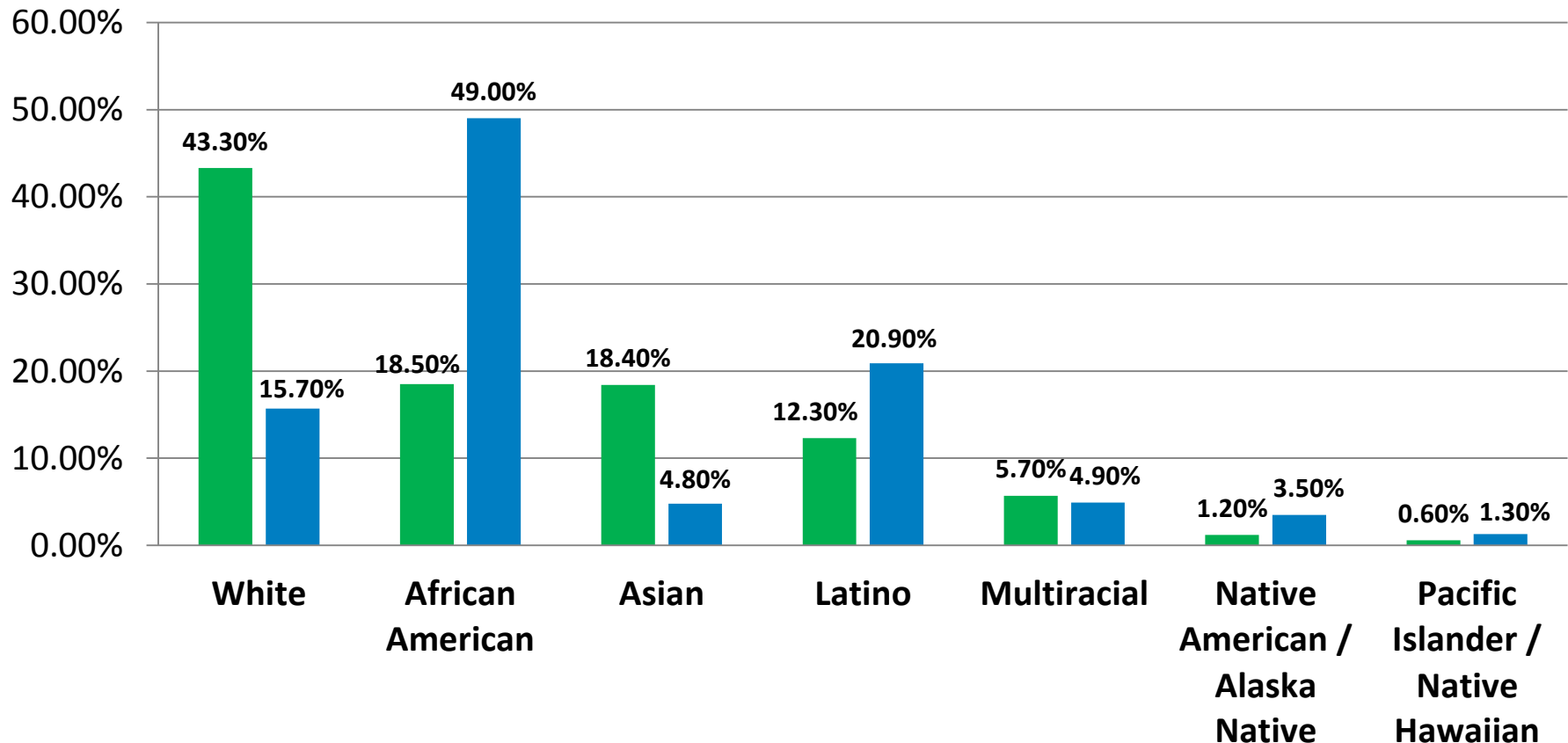
- Students who switch schools frequently score lower on standardized tests; studies have found up to 20 point difference.
- Students who changed high schools even once were less than half as likely as stable students to graduate, even controlling for other factors.
- Mobile students are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and more likely to act out or get into trouble.



# Opportunity Gap & Homeless Students

Racial Disproportionality in Seattle Public Schools Homeless Student Population

■ %, all students   ■ %, homeless students

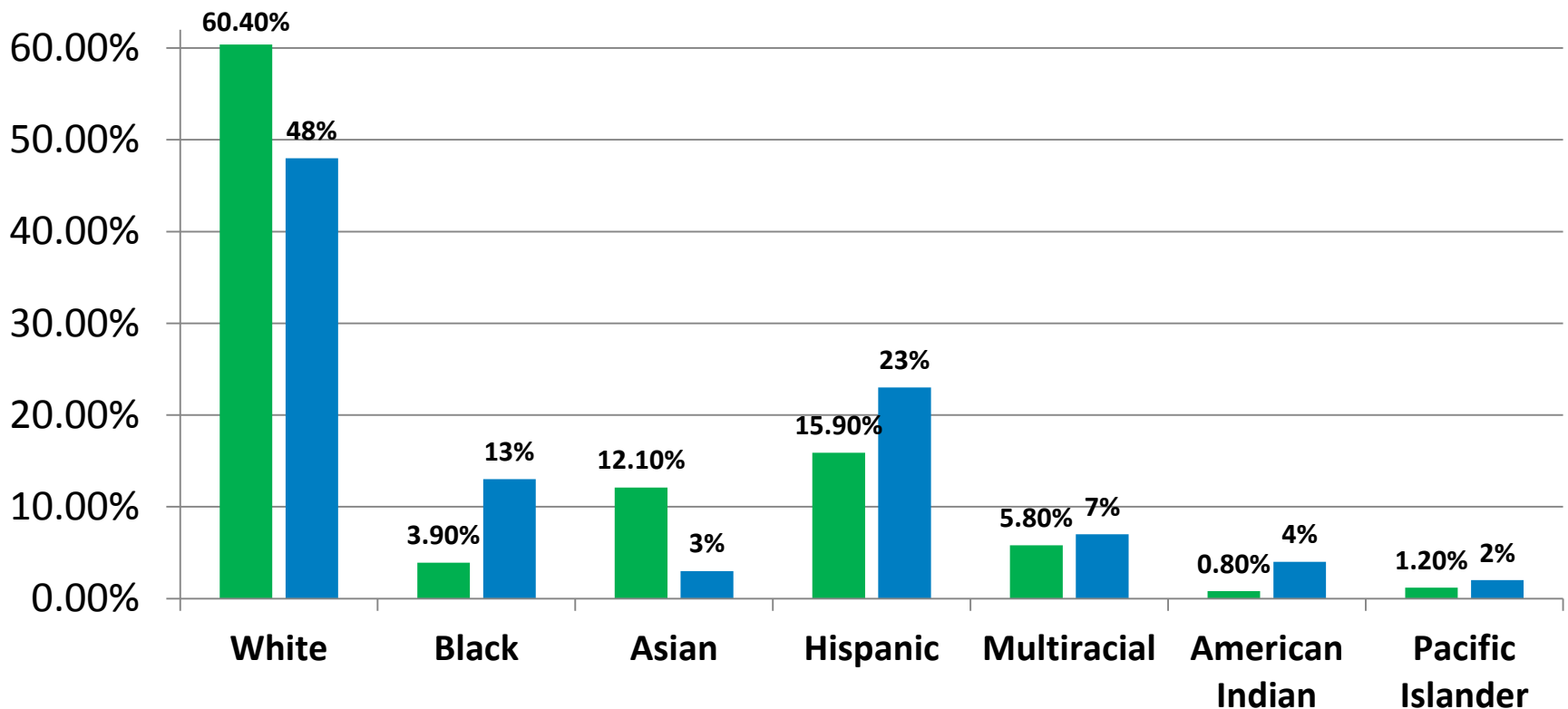




# Opportunity Gap & Homeless Students

**Racial Disproportionality in Everett Public Schools  
Homeless Student Population**

■ All Students   ■ Homeless Students



# Why Data Matters

Reporting and tracking data such as race, gender, high school graduation status, unaccompanied youth status, Special Ed. status, migrant status and disaggregating this information by district, aids schools, service providers and policy makers in understanding the disparate impact of homelessness on various student populations, as well as in crafting and implementing targeted policy solutions.



# Why School Matters



- A positive school experience can help children cope with personal trauma.
  - Children speak of school as an oasis of stability, safety, friendship and normalcy.
- Education is critical for successful transition to adulthood and independence.
  - Even without higher education, youth with a high school diploma earn an average of \$10,386 more per year than those without a diploma.

# Why School Matters



“Through it all, school is probably the only thing that has kept me going. I know that every day that I walk in those doors, I can stop thinking about my problems for the next six hours and concentrate on what is most important to me. Without the support of my school system, I would not be as well off as I am today. School keeps me motivated to move on, and encourages me to find a better life for myself.”

*Carrie, 2002 LeTendre Scholar; formerly homeless youth*

# Contact



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[www.waseh.org](http://www.waseh.org)

# Sources



## **State Data**

Melinda Dyer, State Coordinator, Homeless Education Office, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

## **Racial Disproportionality Data**

Dinah Ladd, Homeless Liaison, Seattle Public Schools

Cynthia Jones, Director of Categorical Programs, Everett Public Schools

## **State Homeless Student Data Analysis**

Columbia Legal Services

## **Other Data**

National Center on Family Homelessness, *Homeless Children: America's Youngest Outcasts 2010*, Dec. 2011.

Consolidated State Performance Report Parts I and II, School Year 2011-12, Washington State

National Center on Homeless Education

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance