

This Q&A was generated during the March 31, 2020 [webinar](#), “Calculating, Awarding, and Accepting Partial Credits for Students Experiencing Homelessness.”

Please note that our webinar system did not record all of the questions that were asked. We apologize for this technical difficulty and welcome any follow-up questions to Patricia Julianelle, patricia@schoolhouseconnection.org.

As important as it is for county offices of education to provide guidance to LEAs, would you all agree that counselors and advocates need to provide information to members of the school community in order to raise awareness?

Absolutely. School counselors, principals, assistant principals, and teachers, as well as students and parents, need know about the availability of partial credits. Counselors and teachers can benefit from strategies to calculate and award partial credits.

How would you give partial credit when a student transfers from out of the country and we do not get their transcripts?

Our experts suggest working with your ELL team, who may have more familiarity with curricula from other countries and may have resources and suggestions. It may be possible to get transcripts emailed to the school or sent in another way. It also may be possible to call or email with teachers or counselors from prior schools, again with the assistance of your ELL team. There also may be ways to gauge a student’s level and competencies through exams and assignments.

Can we issue partial credits for moves within the district—for example, from their home school to an Independent Studies Program, continuation school or other high school?

Definitely. The McKinney-Vento Act requires “identifying and removing barriers that prevent youths described in this clause from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school....” The reference is to a prior school, not a prior school district. Therefore, partial credits are required at any school move, even if it is within the same school district. This also applies to moves in and out of charter schools.

Is this based on seat time or attendance?

It’s important not to base partial credits on seat time or attendance, due to data demonstrating that homelessness significantly impacts attendance. Available data consistently show that students experiencing homelessness have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than any other subgroup. While schools need to take steps to support homeless students’ attendance, they must not be penalized for absences due to homelessness. In fact, the McKinney-Vento Act specifically requires that “the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youths in schools in the State, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.” 42 USC §11432(g)(1)(I). Not being able to earn credit is an enormous barrier to enrollment and retention in school. That barrier must be removed, especially if it is related to absences.

Who has the final say or what is the resolution if there is a disagreement?

If there is a disagreement between local educational agencies, they should contact their McKinney-Vento State Coordinator for assistance. If the student or parent disagrees with the partial credit awarded (or not awarded), they must be assisted in accessing the McKinney-Vento dispute resolution process.

In California, do the county offices of education play a role in ensuring that records are transferred? One challenge we have in Washington is inconsistent (or sometimes nonexistent) transfer reports depending on the district.

County offices of education may be able to intervene to facilitate records transfer. The state department of education also can intervene to remind school districts of their legal obligations to transfer school records under applicable state laws, as well as federal law. The McKinney-Vento Act's requirements that the SEA and LEAs remove barriers to enrollment, as well as the requirement to remove barriers to full and partial credits, both apply to require districts to transfer school records quickly, and for those records to be complete and to include partial credit awards.