

IMPACT REPORT

# Monterey Compassionate Education Systems

2018-2025

# Overview

Compassionate Education Systems, a compassionate systems initiative of the National Center for Youth Law, joined in solidarity with a growing movement across the country to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for all young people. We are working to create a reality where all system-involved youth graduate from high school with the widest array of possibilities for their future. We also envision a future where leaders from multiple public systems – child welfare, education, mental health, probation, and judicial agencies – band together with a sense of imperative and persistence to build conditions in which:

- Children and youth are engaged in learning, empowered to create futures they are excited about, and have champions in their corner for the long run.
- Parents, family members, mentors, and other trusted adults are fully invested in their role as education champions and are consistently and meaningfully supported.
- System and community leaders deeply collaborate on a shared vision that systematically lifts the voices of young people and helps realize equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students.
- Professionals working directly with young people in support of their education are appreciated, supported, and connected with one another.

**We believe that for young people to graduate with a wide array of possibilities for their futures, they need three key things: student-centered engagement; well-coordinated education teams; and effective and committed education champions. Our goal was to facilitate and implement a collaborative program that ensures young people are supported in all the ways they need to succeed.**

**We worked to ensure each young person was positively engaged in school and learning, empowered to take charge of their educational futures, and participating in meaningful relationships with caring adults who consistently and effectively helped guide their educational trajectory.**

# Introduction and Evolution

Our Monterey County Demonstration Site launched with a distinct focus on serving youth experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act. Our partnership was anchored in deep collaboration with the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) and spanned 7 years. In the 2017-2018 school year, NCYL and MPUSD worked together to review data, processes, policies, and the existing support structure to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the McKinney-Vento programming. The Compassionate Education Systems (CES) program launched during the 2018-2019 school year and ran through the 2024-2025 school year.

Our team included a Senior Program Manager and two Education Liaisons, who were co-located across the district's four high school campuses: Seaside High School, Marina High School, Monterey High School, and Central Coast High School.

Our Education Liaisons worked intensively with students on-site to remove all barriers preventing students from being in the classroom and able to learn. Students experiencing homelessness typically face distinct challenges in staying engaged in school due to the instability of their living arrangements. Our staff provided ongoing coaching and case management to engage each student in identifying their unique strengths and needs, often supporting students and families around enrollment rights, transportation, access to nutrition and health services, and sensitive engagement with school staff to effectively advocate for students while protecting their privacy. In addition, Education Liaisons provided individual coaching to key adults in the student's life and coordination with the student's identified team. Furthermore, our staff provided short-term responsive services to any student identified as McKinney-Vento within MPUSD. These responsive services included helping students enroll in school, accessing transportation, coaching during school disciplinary hearings, or connecting with community-based resources. Our responsive services were light-touch and reserved for students who didn't have compounded critical educational needs. **We recognize that there are far more students identified as McKinney-Vento every year than liaisons are able to serve.** Due to this, our team prioritized students based on a variety of factors to identify and serve the students with the highest needs first.

## THESE FACTORS INCLUDE:

- unaccompanied status
- dwelling type
- grade
- pregnant/parenting status
- undocumented status
- chronic absenteeism
- credit deficiency
- multiple behavioral referrals
- special education status

While many factors can be considered when prioritizing students and families, it was vital that our team remained realistic about how many factors we could consistently implement across the team and district so that data gathering did not delay urgently needed services.

Our program manager used extensive data and stakeholder feedback to evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the programs and interventions being implemented. Through this process, we identified trends in data, gaps in services, and additional barriers that needed to be addressed.

**The Monterey CES program evolved each year and learned from both successes and failures.** A program that started out focusing on academic case management quickly expanded into whole-student and family support.

**THIS GROWTH INCLUDED:**

Building out resource centers on each campus districtwide, expanding the team to include additional MPUSD hired liaisons to support the elementary and middle school levels, developing a toolkit to share with other Local Education Agencies (LEAs), establishing a Youth Advisory Board (YAB), launching a safe parking program, and leveraging data to secure private donor funding for three housing programs within the district. These three housing programs include: a Motel 6 partnership to provide 3-6 night emergency stays, Families for Housing (FFH), which provided first and last month rent plus security deposit to families, and the Broadway Apartment, a single unit that provides short-term housing for a family for 3 months.

<b>District leadership and commitment</b>	MPUSD invited partnership, invested in implementation, and used the demonstration to build lasting infrastructure. NCYL matched that commitment with a proven model, coaching, and accountability through data.
<b>Co-located, relationship-based support</b>	NCYL Education Liaisons met students where they were (on campus) and treated stability, belonging, and dignity as essential conditions for learning.
<b>Data plus continuous improvement</b>	EdTeamConnect and shared metrics helped NCYL and MPUSD identify barriers early, adapt interventions, and communicate results to decisionmakers and partners.
<b>Whole-family, cross-system coordination</b>	NCYL paired school supports with housing pathways, health and nutrition access, and coordinated adult champions around each young person.
<b>Tiered systems design</b>	BESTS aligned McKinney-Vento services with MTSS logic so supports scaled across campuses and did not depend on a single person.
<b>Youth voice and belonging</b>	The Youth Advisory Board and strengths-based practice ensured young people were respected as partners in shaping what works.

# Impact

## The Monterey program's wider impact

Part of the CES mission is to impact the lives of more than just those whom we serve directly. Through program improvement, strengthening supports, educating stakeholders, building new partnerships, and policy advocacy, our team is able to indirectly improve experiences and outcomes for all MPUSD students identified as McKinney-Vento.


Due to regular staff development, increased capacity, integrated McKinney-Vento liaisons, and empowered families, MPUSD has seen significant increases in its McKinney-Vento population. Despite the growing population, the district has seen steady increases in positive outcomes for these students each year.

## Monterey district data

### IDENTIFICATION

The partnership strengthened districtwide systems so more students could benefit, even beyond the campuses where NCYL staff were co-located.

- Built infrastructure and strengthened identification practices.
- Increased access to housing questionnaires and online enrollment.
- Focused on continuous improvement informed by data and stakeholder feedback.



McKinney-Vento identification **doubled in five years**, growing from 8.3 % of the student population (about 1,000 students) in 2018-19 to **18.6% (about 2,200)** by 2023-24.

## CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

From the post-pandemic return (2021-22) to 2024-25, chronic absenteeism among McKinney-Vento students dropped from 33.0% to 12.2%. By 2024-25, the gap between all students (11.9%) and students experiencing homelessness (12.2%) had nearly disappeared, a powerful indicator that targeted supports can close long-standing inequities.

**When transportation barriers, basic needs, and school connection are addressed systematically, students show up, stay enrolled, and build momentum toward graduation.**

**FIGURE 1.**

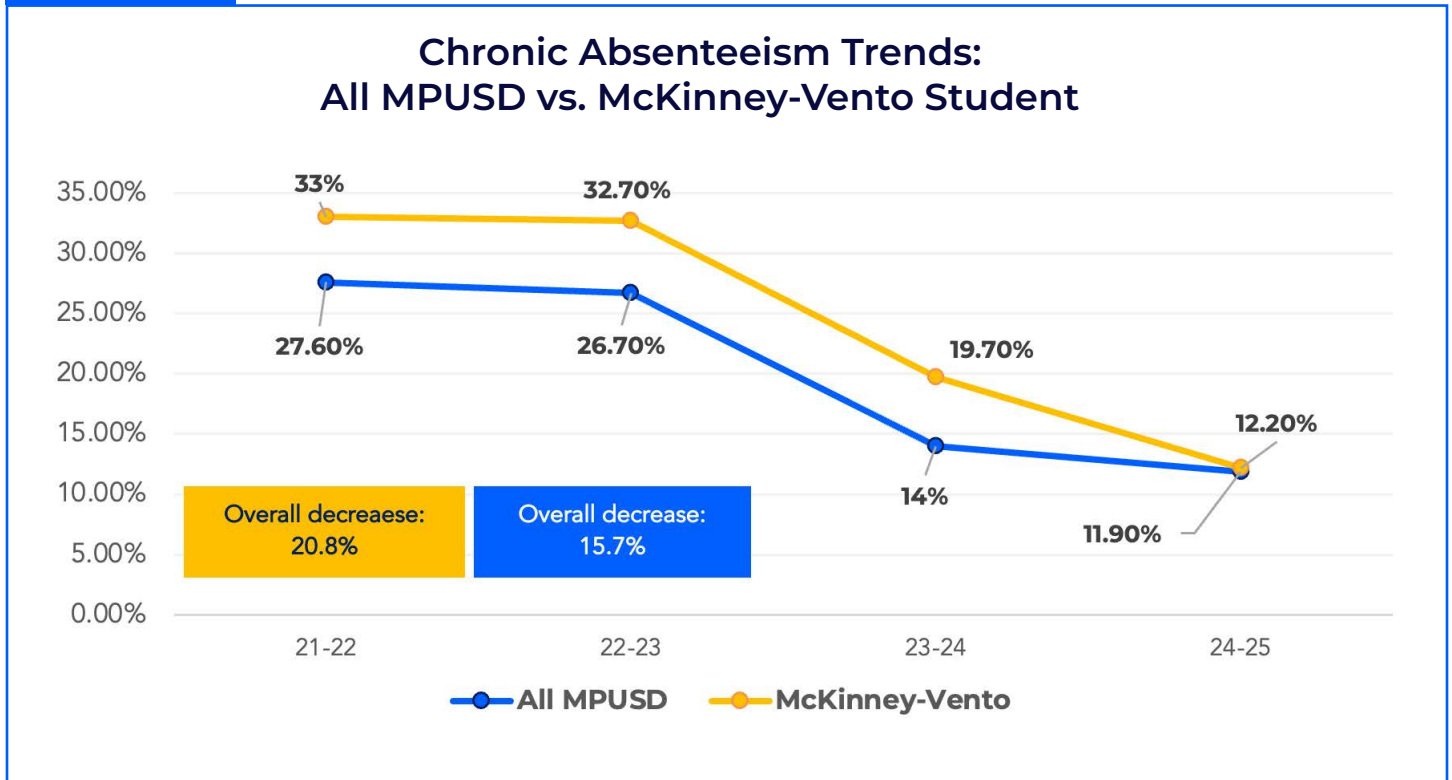


Figure 1. Chronic absenteeism rates for all MPUSD students and for students experiencing homelessness (district-provided data).

NCYL's relationship-based supports, paired with shared data and district leadership, helped MPUSD reduce chronic absenteeism for students experiencing homelessness to near parity with the district overall by 2024-25.

- Transportation and stability supports removed day-to-day barriers to getting to school.
- Basic-needs support (food, hygiene, supplies) reduced crisis-driven absences.
- Shared data and early-warning routines helped teams intervene before absences became chronic.

Above all, a district-wide push to strengthen school to home connections with every family created safe spaces to discuss and address barriers.

## GRADUATION

By Year 7, MPUSD's McKinney-Vento four-year graduation rate reached 97.0%, about 9 points above the county rate (88.4%) and more than 15 points above the state rate (81.8%).

**FIGURE 2.**

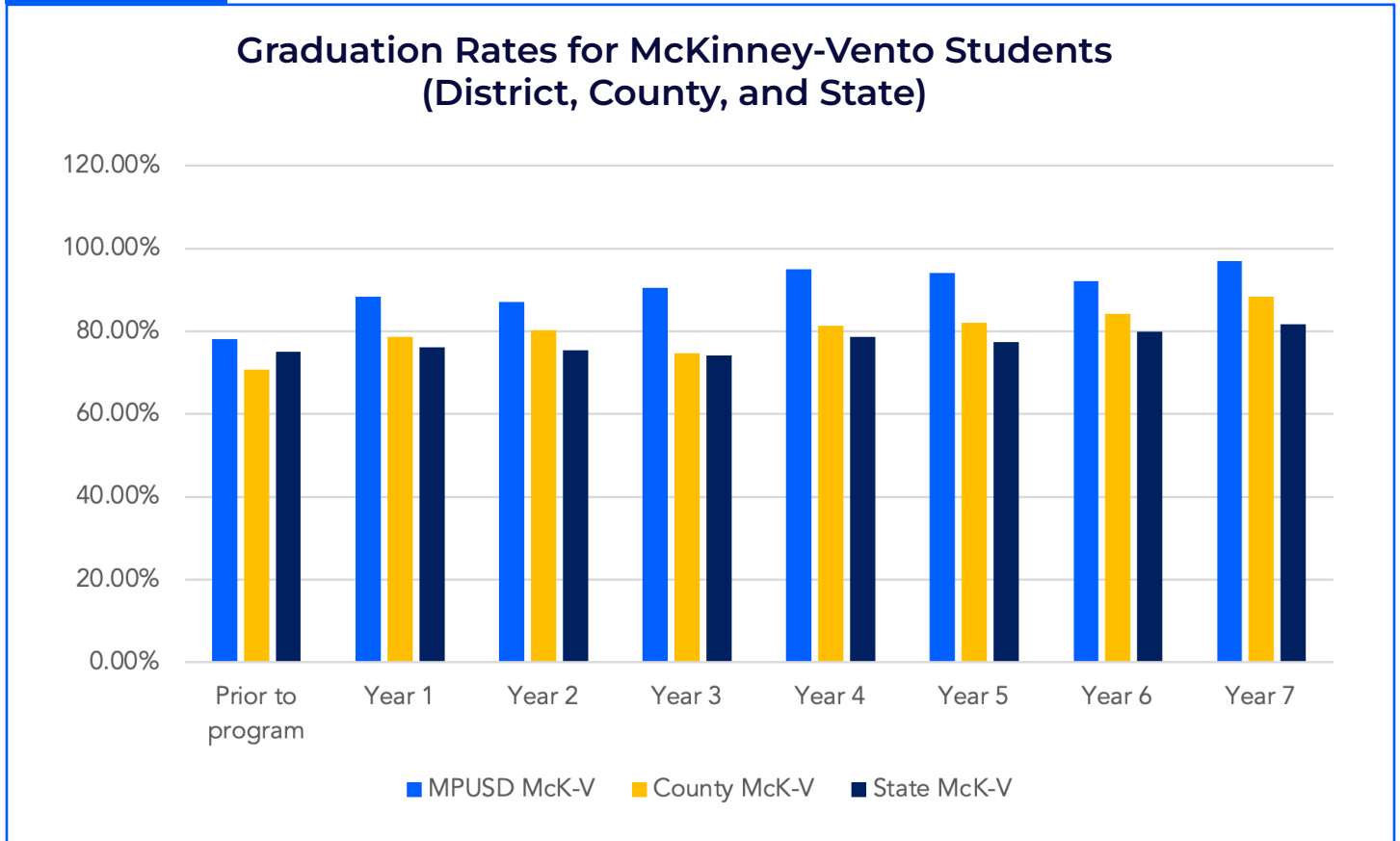


Figure 2. Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness (California School Dashboard).

## Monterey CES-specific data

NCYL utilizes an online case management tool, EdTeamConnect (ETC) for case management and data tracking within our programs. As part of our Memorandum of Understanding with MPUSD, NCYL seeks consent from parents or guardians to provide services to students, access educational records, and track additional data to evaluate both the student's progress and effectiveness of interventions. The following data was gathered by Education Liaisons and stored within ETC.

# 283

STUDENTS SERVED

# 5,308

INTERACTIONS

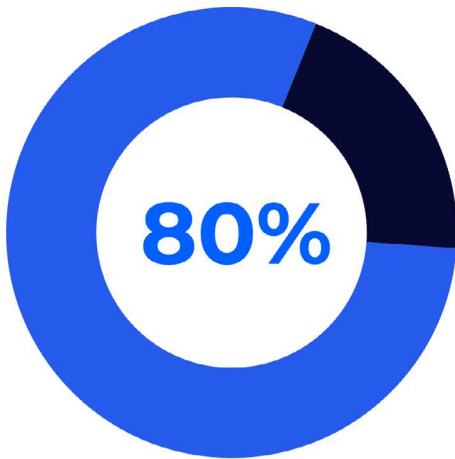
## MCKINNEY-VENTO ANNUAL GRADUATION RATES

YEAR 1-6

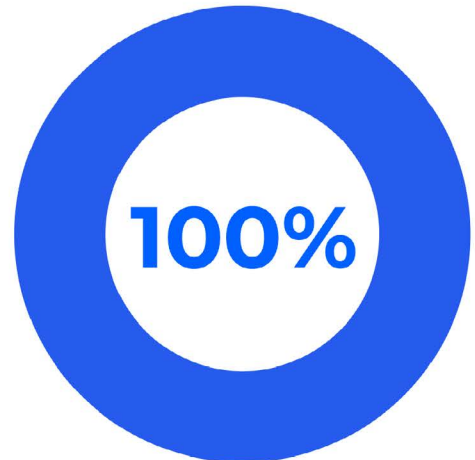
76.9%

YEAR 7

95.2%



OF GOALS  
COMPLETED BY STUDENTS



GRADUATION RATE

*\*For students who served all 4 years.*

## Monterey student story

Data tells a valuable story, but it does not tell the whole story. The students and families with whom we partnered worked tirelessly to better their situations. Their sacrifices cannot always be seen in the quantitative data that we collect. We would be remiss not to amplify their voices, experiences and hard work as part of telling the story of our program. The success of the program is not ours alone, but shared in the wins, both big and small, of our students and families. Without them, we would not be here sharing this work.

A.V. is a young man who was referred to the CES program during his 9th grade year and served for all four years of his high school career. During this time, he lived with his mother and two young siblings. Over the course of the four years, they moved nine times, living in various McKinney-Vento qualifying situations including: hotels, RVs and shared housing. Our team partnered closely with A.V. and his mom to provide as much support and advocacy as possible. This family received: Bus passes, clothing, food, hygiene supplies, school supplies, gift cards, and a Motel 6 emergency stay. The family also resided in MPUSD's Broadway apartment, and were recipients of the FFH program, which ultimately led them to be permanently housed. Despite all the moves, A.V. never transferred schools and, because of this, was not eligible to graduate under the reduced credits (AB 1806). A.V.'s education had been greatly impacted due to his unpredictable living situations and was therefore behind in credits. The team advocated on his behalf and A.V. was able to graduate with reduced credits under AB 2251's graduation requirements, which went into effect in January 2025.

## BESTS toolkit info

In 2022, NCYL and MPUSD's joint efforts were recognized as a promising innovative practice by the California Department of Education (CDE) in the form of the Homeless Innovative Programs (HIP) grant. MPUSD was one of 20 County Offices of Education (COE) and LEAs selected to build a toolkit around their promising and innovative practice. BESTS (Building Equitable Supports through a Tiered System) is a framework that other COEs, LEAs, and districts can use to build out or strengthen their existing McKinney-Vento program and support services. Our BESTS toolkit is based on a three-tiered structure of support that closely mirrors the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) pyramid that many districts already use. This toolkit can still be found on MPUSD's website at: [https://www.mpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=4416339&type=d&pREC\\_ID=2655824](https://www.mpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=4416339&type=d&pREC_ID=2655824)

This toolkit gave the NCYL and MPUSD team the platform to facilitate webinars and present at conferences both within the state and nationally to share out the work. **Extending our network and impact on a larger scale has amplified the voices of young people experiencing homelessness.**

## Trainings held data

47

**TRAININGS PROVIDED FROM YEAR 4  
(JULY 2022 THROUGH MAY 2025)**

NCYL and MPUSD invested in the people who make implementation real: teachers, counselors, liaisons, and administrators. From July 2022 through May 2025, the CES team delivered 47 trainings to strengthen identification, improve referral pathways, and build shared ownership for supporting students experiencing homelessness.

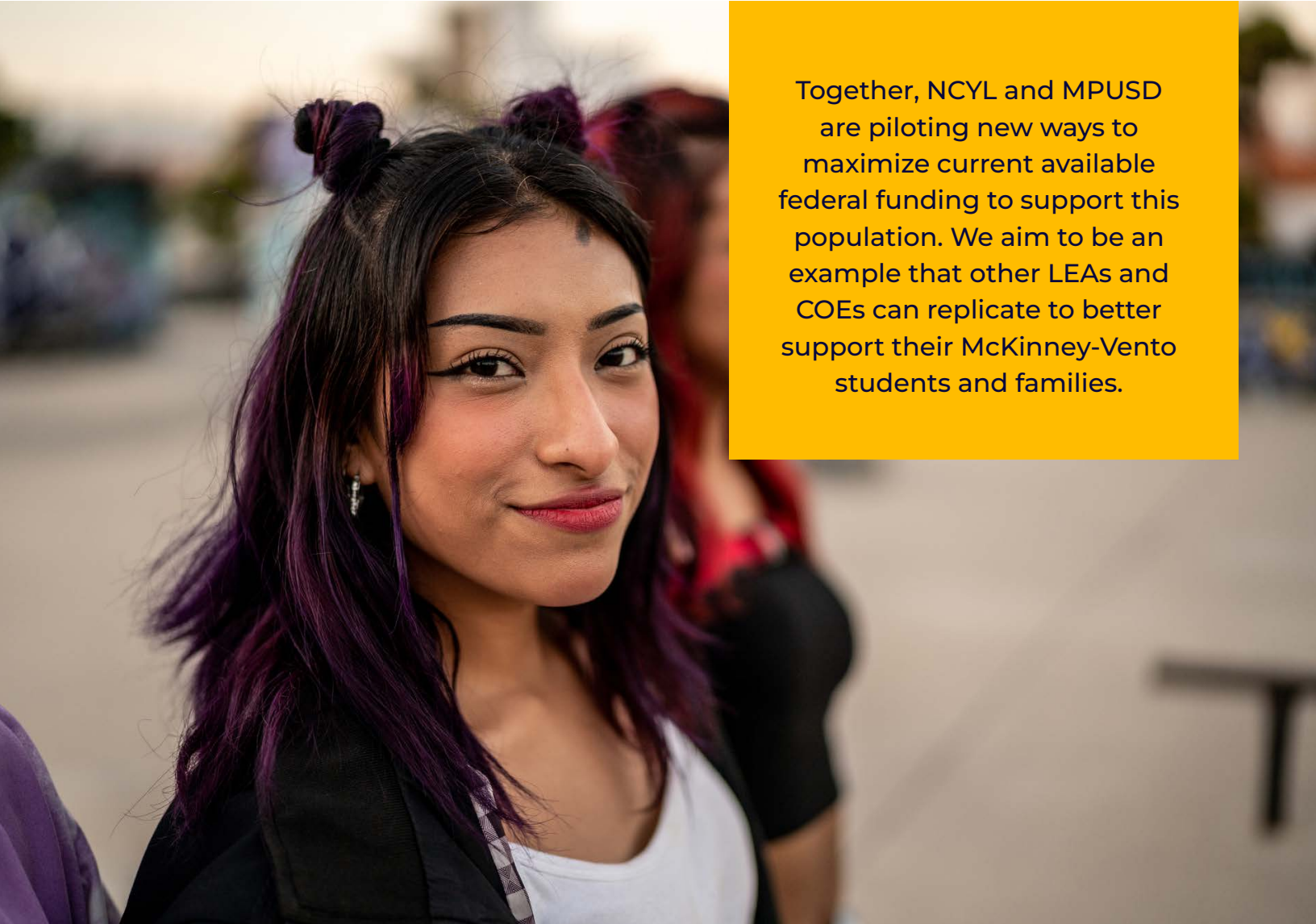
## Sustainability — a look into the next year

The Monterey site was intended to be a three- to five-year demonstration, but after seven years, the CES program transitioned into sustainability for the 2024-2025 school year. NCYL's CES programs run demonstration sites with the foundational belief that the work must transition to being funded with public dollars in public systems.

Without the ability to transition to public funding, it is not sustainable or replicable. CES demonstration sites operate to show proof of concept, which then serves as a model that other LEAs and COEs can adopt.

MPUSD and NCYL have continued to partner as the district moves into sustainability. The district is deeply committed to this population and has moved forward with hiring a housing specialist to support McKinney-Vento students and parents in moving into permanent housing. NCYL is continuing to support a senior program manager to support the development of the position, create data collection systems and metrics for success as well as continue to provide technical assistance to the district.

The housing specialist is replacing the two NCYL provided Education Liaisons. While reducing capacity is not ideal, it highlights the underlying need of consistent funding from the state to support the McKinney-Vento population.



Together, NCYL and MPUSD are piloting new ways to maximize current available federal funding to support this population. We aim to be an example that other LEAs and COEs can replicate to better support their McKinney-Vento students and families.



## Importance of partnerships

This program would not have been able to achieve this much success without the unwavering support of the students and families we serve, the district's teachers, staff, leadership, Superintendent and school board, the Monterey County Office of Education, and many more community partners. The Monterey community has come together to prioritize and support this population of young people. For those students who drop out, not receiving a high school diploma only compounds their difficulties, as those who do not complete high school have an increased risk of further homelessness, unemployment, and becoming involved in the juvenile or criminal legal systems.

As a community we will continue to raise awareness of youth experiencing homelessness and continue to develop collaborative and innovative solutions to these challenges. Together, we are stronger.



# Thank you!

Our NCYL team would like to extend a deep thank you to all who have joined us in solidarity to ensure all young people experiencing homelessness have access to their education, receive the support they need, and can graduate from high school with the widest array of possibilities for their future. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the support of leaders within the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, the Monterey County Office of Education, the community, and most of all without the incredible resilience and dedication of our students and families. We celebrate these accomplishments with you.