

## Education for Homeless Children and Youth Policy

The Westlake Charter School (“WCS”) Board of Directors (“Board”) desires to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational program, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state of California academic standards, are provided a free and appropriate public education, are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness. WCS will strive to ensure all identified or suspected homeless children and youth are referred to the School Liaison.

### Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and it includes children and youth who (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. Are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and/or
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the School Liaison.

### School Liaison

The Executive Director designates the following staff person as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)):

Director, Student Support Services  
2680 Mabry Drive  
Sacramento, California 95835

The School Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by WCS personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies and through the annual housing questionnaire administered by WCS.



2. Homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed, at WCS.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act; early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”); any other preschool programs administered by WCS, if any; and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, the WCS Charter, and Board Policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. The School Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students and that the youth may obtain assistance from the School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

The California Department of Education (“CDE”) publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>.

### **Enrollment**

WCS will work with homeless students and their parent/guardian to ensure that each student is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all students, including, but not limited to, interscholastic sports. All decisions regarding a homeless student’s education and placement will be based on the best interest of the child and shall consider, among other factors, educational stability and the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress.



WCS shall immediately admit/enroll the student for which WCS is a School of Origin. “School of Origin” means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. WCS shall also immediately enroll a homeless youth who seeks to enroll in WCS if the youth would otherwise be eligible to attend and, subject to WCS’ capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the WCS Charter and Board Policy, even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, records of immunizations, other required health records, proof of residency or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C); Education Code Section 48850(a)(3)(A).)

If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Executive Director or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the School Liaison. The School Liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C).) A homeless youth who is enrolled will have the right to attend classes and participate fully in school activities, including extracurricular activities.

A homeless youth may remain in the student’s school of origin for the entire period for which the youth is homeless. Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin following the termination of the child’s status as a homeless student as follows:

1. For students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, inclusive, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through the duration of the academic year in which the student’s status changed.
2. For students enrolled in high school, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through graduation.

If WCS operates an intersession program, WCS shall grant priority access to homeless students. Notwithstanding any other law, if the homeless student will be moving during an intersession period, the pupil’s parent, guardian, Educational Rights Holder (“ERH”), Indian custodian<sup>1</sup> in the case of an Indian child, or, if none of the preceding are applicable, an unaccompanied homeless student themselves shall determine which school the pupil attends for the intersession period, if applicable. “Intersession program” means an expanded learning program offered by WCS on nonschooldays, including, but not limited to, summer school. “Indian custodian” is as the term is defined in Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

### **Enrollment Disputes**

If a dispute arises over admissions/enrollment, the student shall be immediately admitted, subject to WCS’ capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in WCS Charter and Board Policy, pending final resolution of the dispute including all available appeals. The parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the admission/enrollment decision, including an explanation of the parent/guardian’s right to appeal the decision. The parent/guardian shall also be referred to

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<sup>1</sup> “Indian custodian” means any Indian person who has legal custody of an Indian child under tribal law or custom or under State law or to whom temporary physical care, custody, and control has been transferred by the parent of such child. *Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code.*  
*Adopted/Ratified: August 12, 2013; December 14, 2017*  
*Revised: February 13, 2025*



the School Liaison. The School Liaison shall carry out the Board-adopted dispute resolution and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

### **Housing Questionnaire**

WCS shall administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youth. WCS shall ensure that the housing questionnaire is based on the best practices developed by the CDE. WCS shall annually provide the housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians of students and to all unaccompanied youths at WCS. The housing questionnaire shall include an explanation of the rights and protections a student has as a homeless child or youth or as an unaccompanied youth. The housing questionnaire shall be available in paper form. The housing questionnaire shall be available in the primary language other than English spoken by fifteen (15) percent or more of the students enrolled at WCS and shall be translated into other languages upon request of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. WCS shall collect the completed housing questionnaires and annually report to the CDE the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled. (Education Code Section 48851.)

### **Comparable Services**

Each homeless child or youth shall promptly be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in WCS such as (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)):

1. Transportation services
2. Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for students with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency
3. Programs in vocational and technical education
4. Programs for gifted and talented students
5. School nutrition programs

### **Transportation**

In the event that WCS provides transportation services to all WCS students, WCS shall provide comparable transportation services to each homeless child or youth attending WCS, as noted above. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4).)

If the WCS does not otherwise provide transportation services to all WCS students, WCS shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from WCS, at the request of the parent or guardian or School Liaison if WCS is the student's school of origin. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J).) Transportation provided by WCS will be adequate and appropriate for the student's situation, but WCS does not commit to any one method of transportation for all youth.

### **Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities**

A homeless child or youth shall be immediately deemed to meet all residency requirements for participation in interscholastic sports or other extracurricular activities.



## **Waiver of Fees for Afterschool Programs**

WCS shall not charge any student who is a homeless youth any family fees associated with an After-School Education and Safety (“ASES”) Program operated by WCS.

## **Professional Development**

All administrators, teachers and employees of WCS, including the School Liaison, will be provided with professional development on the identification, services, and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless children and youth. The School Liaison will verify that WCS is providing the required training to school personnel providing services to youth experiencing homelessness at least annually through the CDE’s verification system. (Education Code Section 48852.5(c)(2).)

The School Liaison shall offer training to WCS certificated and classified employees providing services to students experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited to, teachers, support staff, and other school staff who work with pupils, at least annually relating to:

1. WCS’ homeless education program policies; and
2. Recognition of signs that pupils are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

The School Liaison shall inform such employees of the availability of training and the services the School Liaison provides to aid in the identification and provision of services to students who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

## **High School Graduation Requirements**

Homeless students who transfer to the WCS any time after the completion of their second year of high school shall be exempt from any of WCS’ graduation requirements that are in excess of the California minimum graduation requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 (“additional graduation requirements”) unless WCS makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete WCS’ graduation requirements by the end of the student’s fourth year of high school.

To determine whether a homeless student is in their third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the student has earned to the date of transfer, the length of the student’s school enrollment, or, for students with significant gaps in school attendance, the student’s age as compared to the average age of students in the third or fourth year of high school may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date that a student who may qualify for exemption under the above requirements transfers into WCS, WCS shall notify the student, the student’s educational rights holder, and WCS Liaison of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption.

WCS shall notify and consult with students who are exempted from WCS’ additional graduation requirements and the student’s ERH. The consultation shall include all of the following:

1. Discussion regarding how any of the requirements that are waived may affect the pupil’s postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a



postsecondary educational institution.

2. Discussion and information about other options available to the pupil, including, but not limited to, a fifth year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
3. Consideration of the pupil's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption.

WCS shall not require any student who would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at WCS to accept the exemption from WCS' additional graduation requirements or deny the student enrollment in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible. WCS shall not revoke an exemption and shall grant an eligible student's request for the exemption at any time if the student qualifies, regardless of whether the student previously declined the exemption.

If a homeless student who was eligible for an exemption and 1) was not properly notified of the availability of the exemption, or 2) previously declined the exemption pursuant to this Policy, WCS shall exempt the student within thirty (30) days of the exemption request, if an exemption is requested by the student or the student's ERH and the student at one time qualified for the exemption, even if the student is no longer homeless.

An eligible student's exemption from WCS' additional graduation requirements will continue to apply while the student is enrolled in WCS or if the student transfers to another school even after the student no longer meets the definition of a homeless child.

WCS shall not require or request that a student transfer schools in order to qualify the student for the exemption. Nor shall a student, a student's parent/guardian or educational rights holder, or a student's social worker or probation officer request a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption from WCS' additional graduation requirements.

If a student who is exempted from WCS' additional graduation requirements completes the California minimum coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at WCS, WCS shall not require or request that the student graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If WCS determines the student is reasonably able to complete WCS' additional graduation requirements by the end of the student's fifth year of high school, WCS shall do the following:

1. Consult with the student and the ERH regarding the student's option to remain at WCS for a fifth year to complete WCS' graduation requirements.
2. Consult with the student, and the ERH for the student, about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete WCS' graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.
3. Consult with and provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. Permit the student to stay at WCS for a fifth year to complete WCS' graduation



requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older, or, if the student is under 18 years of age, upon agreement with the ERH.

5. Consult with the student, and the student's ERH, regarding the student's option to remain in the school of origin.

Through January 1, 2028, upon making a finding that a homeless student is not reasonably able to complete WCS' additional graduation requirements but is reasonably able to complete state coursework requirements specified in Education Code Section 51225.3 within the student's fifth year of high school, the Executive Director or designee shall exempt the pupil from WCS' graduation requirements and provide pupil the option of remaining in school for a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year to complete the statewide coursework requirements. WCS shall consult with the homeless student and the ERH regarding all of the following:

1. The pupil's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.
2. How waiving the local educational requirements and remaining in school for a fifth year may affect the pupil's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a institution of higher education.
3. Whether any other options are available to the pupil, including, but not limited to, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. The pupil's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption and option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.

If a homeless student is not eligible for an exemption in the year in which the pupil transfers between schools, because WCS makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete WCS' additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school, then WCS shall do the following:

1. Within the first 30 calendar days of the following academic year, WCS shall reevaluate eligibility;
2. Provide written notice to the pupil, the ERH, and the pupil's social worker or probation officer, if applicable, whether the pupil qualifies for an exemption upon reevaluation, based on the course completion status of the pupil at the time of reevaluation, to determine if the pupil continues to be reasonably able to complete WCS' additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school.
3. If, given their course completion status at that time the reevaluation is conducted, the pupil is not reasonably able to complete WCS additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school, WCS shall provide written notice to the pupil and the ERH of the pupil's options to:
  - i. Receive an exemption from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board body of WCS that are in addition to the statewide coursework



requirements specified in Section 51225.3, or

- ii. Upon agreement with the ERH, stay in school for a fifth year to complete WCS' additional graduation requirements.

The pupil, if not a minor, or the ERH shall have sole discretion whether to accept the exemption, based on the pupil's best educational interests.

### **Reporting Requirements**

WCS shall report to the CDE annually on the number of pupils who, for the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from WCS' graduation requirements that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements. This data shall be reported for pupils graduating in the fourth year and fifth year cohorts, and shall be disaggregated by cohort, pupil category, race, and disability status. The CDE shall make this data publicly available on an annual basis aligned with other reporting timelines for the California dashboard graduation data.

### **Acceptance of Course Work**

WCS will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency by a homeless student.

WCS will provide homeless students credit for the partial completion of courses taken while attending a public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. If the student did not complete the entire course, WCS shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless WCS, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the homeless student shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the student may continue and complete the entire course. These students shall not be prevented from taking or retaking a course to meet California State University or the University of California admission eligibility requirements.

### **Notice**

For any homeless student who seeks enrollment at WCS, written notice will be provided to the parent/guardian at the time of enrollment and at least annually while the student is enrolled at WCS.

### **Annual Policy Review**

WCS shall review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths or the enrollment of homeless children and youths at WCS. In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship. Special attention shall be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school. WCS' review of its homeless education program policies shall use resources developed by the CDE and posted on the CDE's internet website and resources developed by homeless education technical



assistance centers established using funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

### **School Website Posting**

WCS shall ensure that the following information is posted, and updated as necessary, on its internet website:

1. The name and contact information of WCS Liaison(s) for homeless children and youths.
2. The contact information of any employee or contractor that assists WCS Liaison in completing the Liaison's duties.
3. Specific information regarding the educational rights and resources available to persons experiencing homelessness.

### **Complaints of Noncompliance**

A complaint of noncompliance with any of the requirements outlined above may be filed through WCS' Uniform Complaint Procedures. A copy of the Uniform Complaint Policy and Procedures is available upon request at the main office.