



## **International Network for School Social Work**

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

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### **Electronic Newsletter October 2014**

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### **School Social Workers and Hungry Students**

School social workers in the US deal with the full range of problems that affect children and interfere with their success in school. Children who are hungry or who lack food security are more likely to be sick, miss school, underperform and show signs of maladjustment, and so school social workers throughout the US treat hunger as one of their most basic concerns. Several years after the economic crisis of 2008, 14.5% of families in the US still have poor food security, meaning that they lack access to enough food for a healthy life. (*Household Food Security in the United States in 2012, United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Report No. ERR-155*).

In addition to helping enroll students in free school lunch and summer feeding programs, coordinating with food banks and supplying food baskets during holiday seasons, school social workers in the US are starting to become involved with the problem of school children who are hungry on weekends. Two recent newspaper articles (from North Carolina and North Dakota) feature school social workers who have made this a priority.

#### **Local social worker finds program to feed kids on the weekends**

<http://bakken.com/news/id/221068/local-social-worker-finds-program-feed-kids-weekends/>

Kristin Seaks is a school social worker in a growing town of 30,000 people on the plains of North Dakota who noticed that students came to school hungry especially on Mondays. Many families survive on minimum wage jobs and spend so much of the wages on rent and day care that not enough is left for food. Kristin started the Dickinson Backpack Program and raised money through donations from local organizations and individuals to buy backpacks and food for the weekends. So far this year over 3,000 backpacks of food have been sent home with school children.

#### **Backpack Buddies helps keep hungry elementary school students fed**

[http://www.islandpacket.com/2014/01/20/2898821\\_backpack-buddies-helps-keep-hungry.html?rh=1](http://www.islandpacket.com/2014/01/20/2898821_backpack-buddies-helps-keep-hungry.html?rh=1)

Hilton Head Island is a resort on the east coast popular with tourists for golfing, tennis and sun. Low-paid service jobs contribute to the same problem that exists in North Dakota: wages are too low to support a family and children are often hungry when not in school. School social worker Denise Friday joined efforts with 3 elementary schools, and in 2010 the Backpack Buddies program was started to provide lunches on weekends for children who qualify for free or reduced

price school lunch (from families with earnings below 185% of poverty level). The work is a partnership between schools, civic organizations and churches. School social workers identify the children, contact parents, organize the teams who pack the backpacks, distribute the backpacks, collect the returned backpacks and keep records. Many retirees are also involved in the effort.

### **Viewlands students assemble holiday food boxes to support classmates**

<http://www.seattleschools.org/modules/cms/pages.phtml?sessionid=&pageid=284465>

During the holiday season, many schools in the US provide festive holiday food to last over Thanksgiving and Christmas. In Washington State in the Pacific Northwest where 16% of children live below the federal poverty level, a non-profit corporation partners with schools during the holidays to provide holiday food boxes. Parent, staff and children work together to pack holiday food boxes and distribute them to elementary school children's families at Viewlands Elementary School in Seattle.

## **More School Social workers in the News**

### **In Rochester, New York social workers a staple of local education**

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2014/04/05/social-workers-staple-local-education/7337183/>

A century ago school social workers were hired to help school children in Rochester, New York. This informative and inspiring article describes the wide range of problems the school social workers deal with today and the many types of interventions they use.

- One boy can't sleep because he's afraid his stepfather will come through the window and kill his mother.
- Another hoards food from the cafeteria.
- A young girl has a special place at home to hide when she hears gunfire: under the bed, in the corner farthest from the window.
- Erica Vera, a social worker at School 12 on South Avenue in Rochester, helps them.

### **Life for a homeless student: Transitional housing, changing schools**

[http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2014/09/life\\_for\\_a\\_homeless\\_student\\_tr.html](http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2014/09/life_for_a_homeless_student_tr.html)

In Mobile, Alabama the county school system needs 7 school social workers to handle the needs of homeless students. The 1987 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines homeless children as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are living with relatives or friends; living in motels, hotels or camping grounds; or living in emergency shelters. This article describes the trauma and stress of being a homeless child and how schools and school social workers help.

### **Guǎngzhōu School Social Work Survey**

[http://mp.weixin.qq.com/mp/appmsg/show?\\_biz=MjM5ODI4ODE2MQ==&appmsgid=10018455&itemidx=1&sign=9ab4af22a67ebb19e76f25560764572e&from=timeline&isappinstalled=0](http://mp.weixin.qq.com/mp/appmsg/show?_biz=MjM5ODI4ODE2MQ==&appmsgid=10018455&itemidx=1&sign=9ab4af22a67ebb19e76f25560764572e&from=timeline&isappinstalled=0)

Use Google Translate to read about how school social work is coming to be accepted and in demand in Guǎngzhōu, China. Since the concept of school social work is so new in China, the social workers first worked to become a part of the school and to explain their role. After initial surprise that the social workers are so young, the schools and parents are starting to value their work. The article shows how the new school social workers have interpreted their role to the schools and built relationships with students, parents, teachers and the community. School social work has been growing since about 2008, especially in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.