Policy objective: Improving educational outcomes for children

Children’s academic achievement can be strongly affected by conditions at home and in the surrounding neighborhood.

The following are five major pathways through which housing may impact educational outcomes:

- **Affordable housing programs** free up scarce resources within the budget of low-income families for nutritious food that helps children focus throughout the school day, books and school supplies, and other critical educational expenses.
- **Stable and secure housing** allows children to stay in their homes, cities, towns, and counties, and avoid unplanned moves that can disrupt school attendance and educational advancement.
- **High quality housing** helps children avoid exposure to lead paint and other toxins that cause disease and disability, reduces the risk of asthma and other respiratory ailments, and reduces their risk of injury from falls. These health issues can interfere with children’s schooling and school performance.
- **Well-managed affordable housing** offers access to onsite services and programming that support children’s learning and keep them active and engaged in learning outside of school.
- **Resource-rich neighborhoods** facilitate children’s learning by providing access to high-quality schools, libraries, after-school programs, and other enrichment activities as well as insulation from exposure to violence that can undermine performance.

See the related brief, [Housing and education overview](#), for additional details on each of these pathways.

Encourage better educational outcomes with the housing policy toolkit

This exhibit describes how policy tools in the Housing Policy Library can be used to promote better educational outcomes. The policies listed here are illustrative options within each of the four categories.

I. Create and preserve dedicated affordable housing units
**Logic/motorism:**
Lowering the amount that individuals and families spend on housing frees up additional resources that can be spent on nutritious food, books and school supplies, and other necessities.

Parents or guardians who live in affordable housing may have more time and energy to devote to their children’s education because they do not need to work multiple jobs.

Students who live in resource-rich areas may have better access to high-performing schools and libraries.

Well managed affordable housing developments provide after-school enrichment programs.

**Specific policies:**
Establish strong incentives for the inclusion of affordable units large enough to house families with children (i.e., at least two bedrooms) in well-located market-rate projects, including density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, expedited permitting, tax abatements or exemptions, and reduced or waived fees.

Use inclusionary zoning requirements to set aside a portion of new residential units in resource-rich areas.

Subsidy programs (LIHTC and capital subsidies for affordable housing developments) can help to create new 2+ bedroom affordable units.

Operating subsidies for affordable housing developments and project-basing of Housing Choice Vouchers help to keep rent levels affordable, even for extremely low-income households.

Targeted efforts to create and preserve dedicated affordable housing and to expand the supply of rental housing and lower-cost housing types, particularly larger units appropriate for families, create or preserve options for low-income households in resource-rich and gentrifying areas.
## II. Promote affordability by reducing barriers to new supply

**Logic/mechanism:** Policies that increase the overall supply of housing help to slow the pace of housing cost increases, which can help to reduce high housing costs.

**Specific policies:**
- **Zoning changes** that allow for higher density development and creation of larger (2+ bedroom) units enable the construction of additional units to address housing demand for families with children.
- **Streamlined permitting and review processes** lower the cost and increase the pace with which new homes can be created.

## III. Help households access and afford private-market homes

**Logic/mechanism:** Tenant-based housing assistance helps renters find affordable housing in neighborhoods that offer greater opportunities and access to high-performing schools.

**Specific policies:**
- Renters can use **Housing Choice Vouchers** and other forms of tenant-based rental assistance to access resource-rich areas with good schools, particularly when combined with **mobility counseling** and **increased voucher payment standards in high-cost areas**.

## IV. Protect against displacement and poor housing conditions

**Logic/mechanism:** Programs that help to prevent eviction and foreclosure enable families to avoid unplanned moves that require children to change schools.

**Specific policies:**
- “**Just cause**” eviction policies, **eviction prevention programs**, and **legal assistance for at-risk renters** increase the likelihood that renters will be able to stay in their homes.
- **Foreclosure prevention programs** help to prevent displacement of families who own their homes.
Combining policies to promote better educational outcomes

The policies highlighted in the exhibit can and should be used in combination, as illustrated in the following scenario.

A school district finds that nearly one-quarter of its students change schools throughout the school year, disrupting learning both for the movers and for the students who are left behind. Some of these children are living in shelters or doubled-up with family and friends. The district works with the local public housing agency to create a special housing choice voucher preference for families with school-age children who are experiencing homelessness. The voucher is paired with mobility counseling provided by a local non-profit organization, which helps families find landlords who accept vouchers in resource-rich neighborhoods with good schools. Through the school district, the city’s eviction prevention program conducts outreach to parents of enrolled students to make sure they are aware of available assistance in case they need it to maintain a stable tenancy.