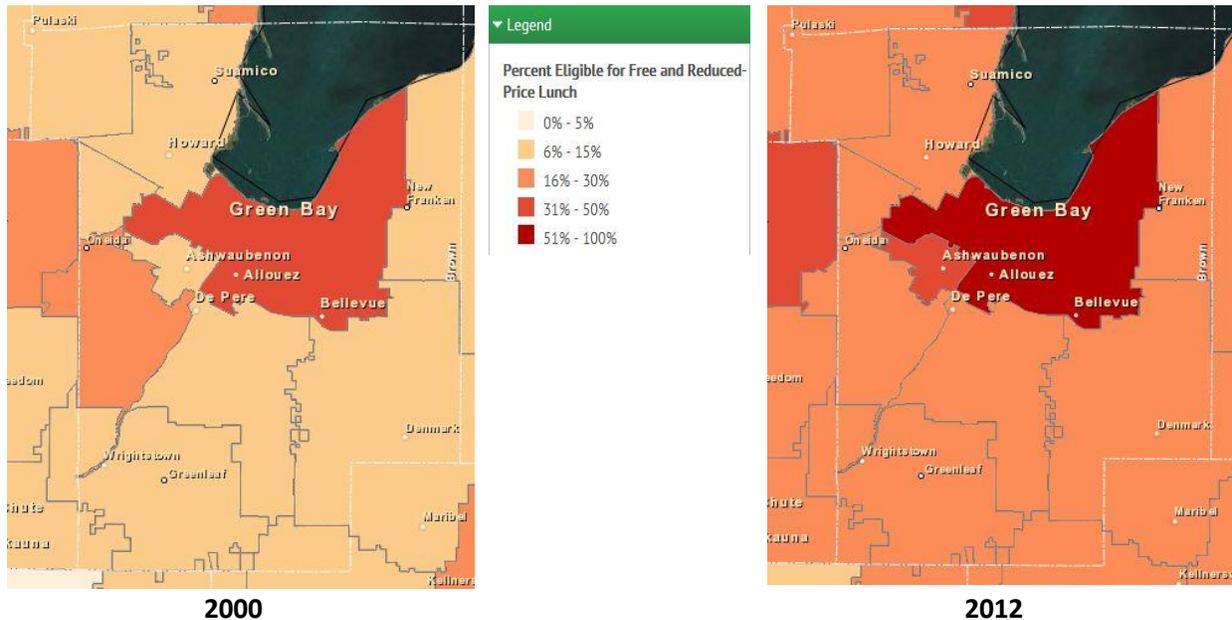


## INCREASING POVERTY

Declining income has been a challenge in communities across Brown County over the last decade. While 29% of Brown County public school students were economically disadvantaged in 2005-06, the number has grown to 40% in 2014-15. And this change isn't just happening in the urban areas. Nearly every school district in Brown County has seen an increase in the percentage of students they serve who qualify for free or reduced price school lunch.<sup>1</sup> This is a widespread challenge.



All school-related data reported by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction uses students who receive free or reduced-price lunch as the definition of economically disadvantaged. Students receive free lunch if their family income is 130% or less of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG), or they have a documented status of being homeless, migrant or runaway. They receive reduced-price lunch if their family income is 185% or less of the FPG.

The normal process is that families complete an application to receive free or reduced price lunches for their children each year. The application documents their income level. Starting with school year 2005-06, Wisconsin introduced an alternative mechanism for documenting family eligibility. If there is other evidence that household income is at or below the income eligibility guidelines, the regular application does not need to be completed.<sup>2</sup> For example, a family that has already proven eligibility for food assistance or W-2 would be automatically eligible for free lunch. This change may have increased the number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch in 2005-06, but since the change occurred ten

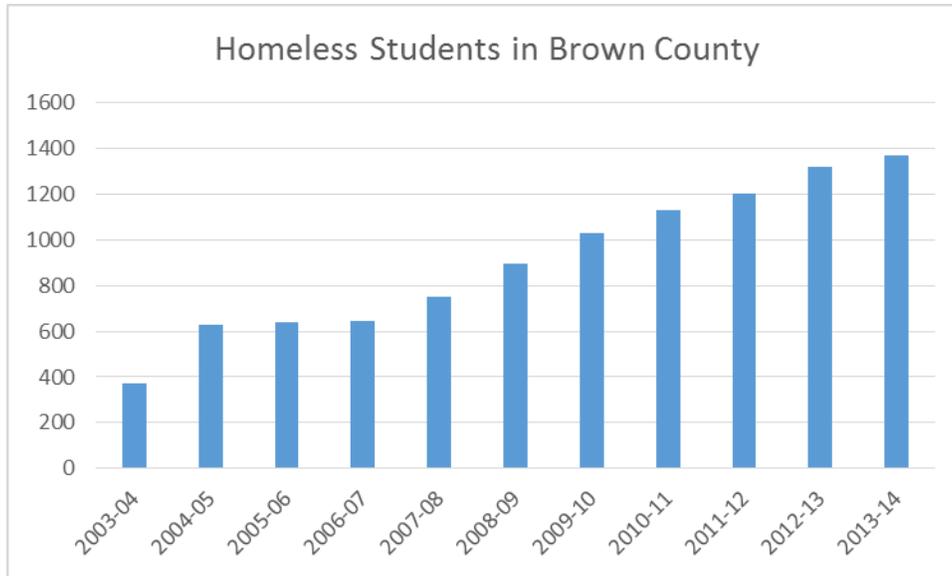
<sup>1</sup> Regional Education Laboratory, <http://www.relmidwest.org/edmaps-app/#view=friStoryMap&states='WI'>

<sup>2</sup> [http://lstat.dpi.wi.gov/lstat\\_dataecon](http://lstat.dpi.wi.gov/lstat_dataecon)

years ago, it is unlikely that it has had any effect on the increasing numbers of economically disadvantaged students since that time.

The Federal Poverty Guidelines vary by the number of persons in the household, and they are adjusted each year to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. For example, the FPG for the upcoming school year of 2015-16 is \$15,930 for a household with two members, and \$24,250 for a household of four.

Another way that increased poverty can be seen in the community is in the increasing number of homeless students. Data reported by the Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction shows that the number of homeless students in Brown County rose from 374 in 2003-04 to 1,369 in 2013-14.<sup>3</sup>



The U.S. McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act requires that youth experiencing homelessness and unaccompanied youth must have access to public school educational programs and services that allow them to meet the same challenging state academic standards to which all students are held. The term 'homeless children and youth' means school-aged individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship.<sup>4</sup> It includes children and youth who:

- Are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Are living in emergency and transitional shelters
- Are abandoned in hospitals
- Have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings

<sup>3</sup> Number of students identified as homeless as reported by each school district in the ESEA Consolidated Application for the 2013-14 school year as of 1/21/2015. See [http://homeless.dpi.wi.gov/hmls\\_data](http://homeless.dpi.wi.gov/hmls_data)

<sup>4</sup> Information on McKinney-Vento and the definition of homelessness come from the Green Bay Area Public Schools Web page <http://www.gbaps.org/Parents/Pages/Homeless-McKinney-Vento.aspx>

- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Are runaway children or children who are abandoned
- Children awaiting foster care placement