EDUCATION LAW CENTER

Education Law Center Testimony:

School Stability Improves
Educational and Life Outcomes for Children in Foster Care

Testimony of Maura McInerney

Before the House Children & Youth Subcommittee

October 6, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Maura McInerney and I am a Senior Staff Attorney at the **Education Law Center ("ELC"),** a statewide non-profit legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all of Pennsylvania's students have access to quality public schools. ELC advocates on behalf of educationally at-risk children, including children who are poor, children of color, children with disabilities, English Language Learners, students experiencing homeless and children in the child welfare system.   Over its almost forty-year history, ELC has been committed to improving educational outcomes for children in foster care through legislative and policy initiatives at the state and national level as well as through litigation strategies.[1] Along with the Juvenile Law Center and the ABA Center on Children and the Law, ELC co-founded the *Legal Center for Foster Care and Education*[2] and is a founding member of the *National Working Group on Foster Care and Education*. ELC is also an active

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[1] In 1987, ELC brought a class action lawsuit that struck down a state statute that had permitted school districts to refuse to educate a non-resident, dependent child living in a foster home. See *Nancy M v. Scanlon*, 666 F.Supp. 723 (E.D. Pa 1987).
[2] See Legal Center for Foster Care and Education website at http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/

member of the statewide multi-stakeholder *Pennsylvania State Roundtable on Educational Success and Truancy Prevention* which focuses on improving educational outcomes for children in Pennsylvania's dependency system.[3]

What We Are Seeing

As a staff attorney at ELC, I have been involved in hundreds of individual cases involving children and youth in foster care. I have consistently heard from students, foster parents, child welfare professionals, and school staff about the importance of children in care remaining in the same school, even when their living placement changes. Over the years, we have seen what a profound difference school stability makes in the educational trajectory and life outcomes of children in care and have focused statewide and national attention on this issue. Here are a few examples of cases ELC has handled which reflect why remaining in the same school is so important.

In some cases, like Michael's, school stability can make the difference between a youth graduating or dropping out:

> *Michael is a shy youth who experienced significant trauma in his life. In middle school, he bounced around to numerous foster care placements and many schools. Beginning in 9th grade, Michael was able to stay in the same school and it became a place where he felt safe and at "home." He told me it was the one thing that "went right" in his life. He was active in school activities, earned good grades, had friends and strong ties to his teachers and guidance counselor. But in his senior year, after three years in the same school, his living placement changed and he received a notice that he would be disenrolled from school. Although he was on track to graduate and attend post-secondary school, starting over in a new school meant meeting different graduation requirements and string in a school where he wouldn't know anyone of have any connections. Staring over threatened to undermine his ability to graduate on time – or at all. He said he would drop out if he had to start all over in a new school in 12th grade. He desperately wanted to graduate with his classmates from the only high school he had ever attended.*

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[3] For more information regarding the State Roundtable go to http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/about-ocfc/truancy
See 2012 Report to Pennsylvania State Roundtable (May 2012) available at
http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/assets/files/page-382/file-1112.pdf .

In other cases, like Andrea's, staying in the same school can mean the difference between identifying necessary student support services or having those needs go unnoticed:

> *Andrea entered foster care at age 6 and attended 11 schools by age 16 -- staying in only two of those schools for more than one year. She struggled academically in each school. When she changed placements yet again in high school, her foster mother fought for her to stay in the same school. As a result, during her final three years of school, she was finally identified as eligible for special education services and for the first time, Andrea thrived.*

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And in cases like Jarrett's it can mean the difference between academic success and failure:

> *During his time in foster care, Jarrett changed schools six times. One of these moves occurred three weeks before the end of the semester. Despite his requests, he was not permitted to stay in the same school and was also prohibited from taking final exams or completing final projects at his prior school. Instead, he was forced to transfer to a new school where he had to re-take course. Because his records didn't arrive on time, Jarrett's GPA plummeted from 3.6 to 1.4 due to "missing coursework."*

Along with my testimony today, I have also submitted other stories from youth in foster care across Pennsylvania who have faced similar struggles – including the story of one youth was in 27 different living placements and could not remember the names of all the schools she attended.[4]

ELC's support for school stability for children in foster care is not based on our empirical experiences alone, but rather is rooted in research demonstrating that school stability effectively promotes academic success and improves educational and life outcomes for this exceptionally vulnerable student population.

Children in Foster Care Are in Educational Crisis

Children and youth in foster care are in educational crisis. It is well documented that they experience lower academic achievement, lower standardized test scores, higher rates of

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[4] See *School Success for Students in Foster Care: Pennsylvania Youth Share Their Stories* developed from cases handled by the Education Law Center and Juvenile Law Center which is submitted as part of my testimony.

grade retention and higher dropout rates than their non-foster care peers.[5] One study in New York found that eighty percent of children in foster care were held back in school at least once by the time they reached 3rd grade.[6] A recent study conducted by the PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP PolicyLab), which examined the educational outcomes of over 68,000 students in the School District of Philadelphia during the 2011-12 school year, disclosed that DHS-involved students had substantially lower PSSA scores and promotion rates; higher rates of special education eligibility and absenteeism; and accumulated fewer credits than their non-DHS involved peers.[7] A national review of studies conducted between 1995 and 2005 revealed that approximately half of foster youth complete high school by age 18 compared to over 70% of youth in the general population.[8] According to a 2005 study, 75.2% of children placed in foster care in Philadelphia dropped out of school.[9] Youth in foster care who drop out of school are far more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty, receive public assistance and become homeless or incarcerated.[10]

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[5]National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care (January, 2014) available at http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?EntryId=1937&Comm and=Core_Download&method=inline&PortalId=0&TabId=124.. The National Factsheet is submitted as an attachment to my testimony today.

[6] Vera Institute of Justice, "What Keeps Children In Foster Care From Succeeding in School?," (2002), available at http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/what%20keeps%20children.pdf.

[7] The full report, *Supporting the Needs of Students Involved with the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System in the School District of Philadelphia* is available at http://policylab.chop.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/publications/PolicyLab_Report_Supporting_Students_Involved_with _Child_Welfare_June_2014.pdf.

[8] Wolanin, T. R. (2005). *Higher education opportunities for foster youth: A primer for policymakers.* Washington, DC: The Institute for Higher Education Policy.

[9] See RC Neild, R Balfanz, Philadelphia Youth Network, The Johns Hopkins University, Unfulfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000–2005 (2006), available at http://www.pyninc.org/download/pdf/Unfulfilled_Promise_Project_U-turn.pdf.

[10] Harlow, C.W. (2003, January. Revised April 15, 2003). Education and Correctional Populations. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Why School Stability Matters

Research also shows that one of the most significant barriers to school success is school mobility.[11] It is estimated that school age children in foster care commonly experience 2.8 living arrangement changes during their first foster care stay.[12] These children frequently change schools – on average 2.7 times in two years, with over a third of young adults in foster care reporting having five or more school changes.[13] Children who change schools lose critical academic progress with every school move, which can be devastating to a child's education.[14] Research indicates that students may lose four to six months of educational progress each time they change schools.[15] Moreover, it is estimated that it takes the average child many months to recover academically from each school change and as a result, many children in foster care not only fail to recover, but lose ground.[16] When they fall behind, they also lose hope, give up and

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[11] National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care (January, 2014) available at http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?EntryId=1937&Command=Core_Download&method=inline&PortalId=0&TabId=124

[12] *Source*: *The Center for State Child Welfare's 2011 data*. The Center draws data from 29 states and two counties. Each youth who first entered care between 2005-2009 is represented in this data. The number of living arrangements was counted from entry date through the end of 2011.

[13] Zorc, C.S., O'Reilly, A.L.R., Matone, M., Long, J., Watts, C.L., Rubin, D. (2013). The relationship of placement experience to school absenteeism and changing schools in young, school-aged children in foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 35(5), 826-833 (students in care changed school an average of 2.7 times in two-year period).

[14] Kerbow, D. (1996). *Patterns of urban student mobility and local school reform*. Technical Report No. 5, October. Washington, DC: Center for Research on the Education of Children Placed at Risk.

[15] *See* Rogers, J. (1991). Education Report of Rule 706 Expert Panel, presented in B.H. v. Johnson, 715 F. Supp. 1387 (N.D. Ill. 1989). Chicago, IL: Department of Education, Loyola University.

[16] Burley, M. & Halpern, M. (2001). *Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care.* Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The sample of 4,559 children and youth in foster care in Washington State was generated by merging foster care data from the Division of Children and Family Services with Iowa Standardized Test Scores received from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for grades 3, 6, and 9.

drop out. As one study explained, five or more school moves makes academic progress virtually impossible.[17] The negative impact of high school mobility rates include higher rates of grade retention.[18]

Other collateral difficulties faced by youth in foster care stem from or are exacerbated by high rates of school mobility. These include delays in school enrollment, inappropriate school placements mid-year, failure to receive full course credits and difficulties accessing appropriate special education and other services. For example, delays in school enrollment for this highly mobile population often occur upon a child's initial entry into foster care or when a subsequent placement change involves changing schools.[19] [20] In addition, children who experience frequent school changes may also face challenges in developing and sustaining supportive relationships with teachers or with peers and are negatively impacted socially. Analysis of a six-year study reported a tendency for highly mobile students to suffer psychologically, socially, and academically.[21] High rates of mobility among students also negatively impact classrooms and

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[17] *Id.*

[18] Gerber, J. & Dicker, S.(2005). Children adrift: Addressing the educational needs of New York's foster children. *Albany Law Review, 69*(1), 1–74; Courtney, M.E., Terao, S. & Bost, N. (2004a). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

[19] One-fifth of the Illinois children aged 11 to 17 years old who entered foster care without first receiving in-home services were either not enrolled in school or had been absent for so long that they were effectively not enrolled. Many of these youth had become disengaged from school and remained disengaged after entering foster care (Smithgall, et al., 2010).

[20] Approximately half of the caregivers of school-aged foster children in nine San Francisco Bay Area counties who were interviewed in 2000 had had to enroll their foster child in school, and 12% of those caregivers had experienced enrollment delays of at least two weeks (Choice, et al., 2001 [response rate; 28%]).

[21] Rumberger, R. W., Larson, K. A., Ream, R. K., & Palardy, G. J. (1999). The educational consequences of mobility for California students and schools. PACE Policy Brief, 1(1). Available at http://pace.berkeley.edu/pace_mobility_final.pdf. p. 3.

schools, impacting non-mobile as well as mobile students.[22] As a result of all of these factors, children in care face an uphill battle to learn and to graduate.

Correlatively, educational stability improves academic achievement. In a national study of 1,087 foster care alumni, youth who had even one fewer placement change per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving foster care.[23] Researchers in a later study reported that the odds of graduating from high school were 4.6 times higher if students had experienced a low rate of placement change (*i.e.,* less than .5 per year) and 2.7 times higher if they had experienced a moderate rate of placement change (*i.e.,* .50 to .99 per year) than if they had experienced a high rate of placement change (*i.e.,* at least 1 per year). In addition, the odds of graduating from college were 3.7 higher for students who experienced 6 or fewer school changes compared with 10 or more school changes.[24] Academic achievement has also been correlated with living and school placement stability. In a Minneapolis study that compared homeless and highly mobile children in 2nd to 5th grades over a three-year period, the importance of stability was highlighted. Researchers found that even after controlling for sex, ethnicity, English as a second language (ELL status), and attendance, homeless and highly mobile students still scored lower in reading and math as compared to their stable peers and these differences were evident as early as second grade.[25]

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[22] Mao, M. S., Whitsett, M. D., & Mellor, L. T. (1998). Student mobility, academic performance, and school accountability. ERS Spectrum, Winter 1998, 3-15.

[23] Pecora et al., 2006, Northwest Alumni Study and Pecora, P., Williams, J., Kessler, R.C., Downs, A.C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs

[24] Pecora, P.J., Kessler, R.J., Williams, J., Downs, A. C., English, D.J., White, J. & O'Brien, K. (2009). *What Works in Foster Care?: Key Components of Success From the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*. New York: Oxford University Press.
[25] Obradovic´, J., J. Long, J. Cutuli, C-K. Chan, E. Hinz, D. Heistad, and S. Masten. 2009. "Academic Achievement of Homeless and Highly Mobile Children in an Urban School District: Longitudinal Evidence on Risk, Growth, and Resilience." Development and Psychopathology 21:493–518

Federal Laws Establish a Presumption in Favor of School Stability

Recognizing the importance of school stability, Congress has enacted two federal laws to address this issue: the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act[26] and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008[27] both seek to ensure school stability for populations of children who are highly mobile. Since 1987, the *McKinney-Vento Act* has supported school stability and immediate enrollment for students experiencing homelessness. In 2008, the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*,[28] (*Fostering Connections*) went into effect, requiring child welfare agencies to collaborate with local education agencies ("LEAs") to ensure school stability for children in foster care unless this is not in the child's best interest. Specifically, *Fostering Connections* requires child welfare agencies to develop a school stability plan as part of each child's case plan and, when making a placement decision, a child welfare agency take into account the appropriateness of a child's present educational setting and its proximity to the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement.[29] The Act specifically mandates that a child's case plan include assurances that the child welfare agency has "coordinated" with local educational agencies to ensure that a child remains in his current school, or, if this is not in the child's best interest, that the child is immediately and appropriately enrolled in a new school with all school records.[30] The Act also expressly provides that Title IV-E maintenance dollars may be used to provide "reasonable travel for the child to remain in the school in which the child is enrolled at

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[26] 42 U.S.C. § 11431, et seq.

[27] Pub. L. 110-351, 122 Stat. 3949 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 42 U.S.C.).

[28] Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (hereinafter "Fostering Connections"), Pub. L. 110-351, 122 Stat. 3949 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 42 U.S.C.).

[29] 42 U.S.C. 675(1)(G)(i) (2010).

[30] 42 U.S.C. § 675(1)(G)(ii)(II).

the time of placement."[31] If a child does change schools, the Act expressly requires child welfare agencies to collaborate with LEAs to ensure that the child is immediately enrolled in a new school.[32]

Making School Stability a Reality in Pennsylvania

The school stability and immediate enrollment provisions of the Fostering Connections Act offer vital protections to improve educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care. Since the *Fostering Connections* Act went into effect in 2008, many states have enacted legislation to make school stability a reality for children in foster care.[33] However, these provisions have not been fully implemented in Pennsylvania, in part due to the absence of clearly defined obligations applicable to school districts, child welfare agencies and the courts.   We know from our work that enacting such legislation is a much-needed reform initiative because school stability has the power to vastly improve educational outcomes for children in foster care, and yet Pennsylvania students continue to face significant barriers to achieving this goal. ***ELC strongly supports H.B. 569 and 973 as a critical first step in fully implementing school stability protections for children in foster care in the Commonwealth***.

H.B. 973 proposes amendments to the Public Welfare Code that accurately reflect and clarify the duties of child welfare professionals to ensure school stability when this is in the child's best interest and to facilitate the immediate enrollment of a child in a new school with education records provided. H.B. 569 proposes amendments to the Judiciary and Judicial Procedure Act which direct courts to play a critical role in ensuring school stability in the best interest of the

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[31] Fostering Connections Act, 42 U.S.C. § 675(4)(A).
[32] Fostering Connections Act, 42 U.S.C. § 675(1)(G)(ii).
[33] A summary of state legislation is available at "Fostering Connections.org"
http://www.fosteringconnections.org/resources/topic_legislation?id=0002.

child at every stage of the adjudicatory process.   In order to further strengthen the impact and

scope of these important amendments, we recommend that the Committee consider the following

recommended revisions:

- ***Establish a consistent, strong presumption in favor of school stability***: We propose that both bills be amended to state that a child shall remain in the same school unless a court or county agency determines that "remaining in the same school is contrary to the child's well-being or safety." This "well-being" prong includes the impact of travel time on the child. Certainly, there will be many instances in which the duration of travel time to and from school will support a finding that school stability is not in a child's best interest, but, as it is in the McKinney-Vento context, this should be a child-centered best interest determination and should not rest on a county agency's determination that school stability is impracticable for the agency.

- ***Clarify the term "change in placement" and use a consistent definition of "original school"*** We recommend that the legislation be modified to specifically reference "original school" as the school the child attended prior to any transfer of physical custody or change in placement. This would parallel the options in the McKinney-Vento Act which include a child's current school and the school the child attended prior to becoming homeless. We would also clarify that a change in placement encompasses "any transfer of physical custody" (to a relative, for example) or formal change in placement and includes an emergency modification in placement made pursuant to PA R.J.C.P. 1606.

- ***Ensure immediate enrollment in a new school.*** We would recommend referencing the school code regulations which require enrollment to occur "the next business day" and in no case more than five days of submission of enrollment documents. See 22 Pa Code 11.11(b). We would also recommend referencing the county agency's obligation to maintain education records in the case file which is often critical to ensuring immediate enrollment. See Section 471(a)(16) and Section 475(1) of the *Social Security Act.*

- ***Revise the legislation to ensure that transportation costs are provided or shared in a cost-effective manner.*** We recommend that the proposed legislation be amended to clarify that the county agency placing the child must collaborate with local education agencies to arrange for the provision of transportation. We further propose that the transportation provisions of H.B. 973 be amended to reference that transportation costs may be "provided by any other method approved by the county agency" which may include a voluntary agreement between a county agency and an LEA regarding shared the cost of transportation. Moreover, the legislation should reference that the county agency pays unless transportation can be or is agreed to be provided by the school district where "the child lives" or is enrolled in school at "no minimal cost." This provision should also acknowledge current School Code's transportation

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statutes. These recommendations emanate from our experience working directly with county agencies and school districts across Pennsylvania in individual cases and through the development of Memorandums of Understanding to address transportation costs in an efficient and cost-effective manner. For example, we have been involved in situations where a county agency can arrange for a child to be transported to a bus stop and a district can then transport the child to school incurring no additional cost. Our proposed revisions also reflect ELC's experience in working with other states and local agencies to address transportation costs in other jurisdictions. As reflected in an issue brief authored by the *Legal Center For Foster Care and Education,* there are many ways to address transportation costs that should be explored to support school stability in the most cost-effective manner.[34]

By delineating the roles and responsibilities of county children and youth agencies and courts, the proposed legislation fills an important void in ensuring school stability for children in foster care. However, local education agencies also have an essential role -- and stake[35] -- in improving educational outcomes for children in foster care by supporting school stability. ELC has been involved in many cases where children have been unable to remain in the same school as many school districts are unaware of or uncertain about the application of *Fostering Connections* to local education agencies and how to obtain tuition reimbursement for a non-resident student seeking school stability in accordance with applicable state auditing requirements.   It is ELC's view that there are significant issues that need to be addressed through amendments to Pennsylvania's School Code in order to make school stability a reality for children in foster care. Accordingly, in addition to supporting House Bills 569 and 973, we

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[34] See *When School Stability Requires Transportation* available at http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/center_on_children_and_the_law/education/transportation_brief_final_revised.authcheckdam.pdf

[35] *See e.g.,* NCLB's "Statement of Purpose" describes the intent of the law in part as "closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers . . .holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students . . ." 20 U.S.C. § 6301.

urge legislators to *consider amendments to Pennsylvania's education statutes and regulations* to accomplish the following objectives:

- **Ensure that school districts permit children in foster care to remain in the same school when this is in their best interest;**

- **Ensure that an educating school district is authorized to obtain tuition reimbursement from a fostering school district;**

- **Ensure immediate enrollment of these students in a new school, with prompt transfer of education records;**

- **Ensure that transportation to support school stability is promptly provided and that the cost of transportation is paid for either by Children and Youth or by the school district where the child is enrolled in school or living either by agreement of the district(s) or in cases where there is no or minimal cost to a school district;**

- **Ensure equal access to educational and extra-curricular opportunities;**

- **Establish a point of contact at school districts for children in foster care to assist students in accessing appropriate classes, ensuring that credits earned are counted or that certain credit requirements are waived as appropriate and to assist in developing a plan so that these students are able to stay on track to graduate;**

- **Provide access to a state-issued diploma for children in foster care who meet state graduation requirements but are unable to obtain a school-district issued diploma after exhausting all other options.**

- **Promote interagency collaboration between child welfare and education agencies.**

We would be happy to work to develop these much-needed amendments to the education statutes and regulations.

Conclusion

Educational achievement is critical to a child's current well-being and his future success. Ensuring the well-being of children in foster care is an important responsibility for child welfare agencies and is not just a theoretical obligation. Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act

include education as an important "well-being" factor, and all states are evaluated on the extent to which children in care have received appropriate education service during the Child and Family Service Reviews. (CFSRs). [36] Local education agencies also have an essential stake in improving educational outcomes of children in care – not only because they are charged with the duty of educating school-aged students, but also because federal and state laws obligate them to focus attention on closing the achievement gap between high and low performing students.[37] Schools cannot meet such requirements without addressing the educational needs of one of the most educationally at-risk of all student populations – students in foster care. Child welfare agencies and school districts must work together, in tandem based on clearly delineated and complimentary legal requirements in order to accomplish the common goal of improving educational and life outcomes for children in foster care.
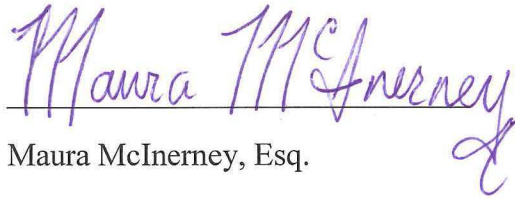
We support the proposed legislation as well as recommendations for amendments to Pennsylvania's school laws to ensure that a quality education and high school graduation do not remain beyond the reach of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable student population. By moving forward to provide school stability we can break the cycle of failure and poor life outcomes for children in foster care. As Michael – who is now in college asked me to tell you: "Without school stability I would have dropped out and it would have changed everything for me."

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[36] Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs) are conducted by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families and specifically include whether each State has met the educational needs of children in care as Well-being Outcome No. 2, Item 21. To learn more about CFSRs go to http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/index.htm#cfsr.

[37] NCLB's "Statement of Purpose" describes the intent of the law in part as "closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers . . .holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students . . ." 20 U.S.C. § 6301.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding this submission.

Date: October 6, 2014

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School Success for Students in Foster Care:
Pennsylvania Youth Share their Stories

Ana

Since she was first placed in foster care as an 18-month-old, Ana has been in 27 different living placements. She cannot even remember how many schools she has attended. She has had to retake the same courses several times - sometimes simply as a result of her new school failing to obtain any records from her prior schools. For example, she had to take Spanish I four times and repeated a child development class where she had to take home a "fake baby" three times.

Andrea

Andrea entered foster care at age 6 and has since attended 11 schools, staying in only two of those schools for more than one year. Although she took Spanish I at her first high school, the record did not transfer when she changed living placements and schools in 10th grade. As a result, she was forced to retake Spanish I as a senior (despite having completed Spanish II as a junior) to meet her district's language requirement. Although she moved again in the middle of high school, this time, with the help of her new foster mother, Andrea was able to remain in the same school and thrived.

Josh

When Josh transferred high schools, he had already completed Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. His new high school required Algebra "1.5," a 10th grade course that he was forced to take as a senior. Having already completed more advanced coursework in Algebra II, Josh was not challenged and disengaged from the class. His grades suffered and he got in trouble for his behavior.

Jarrett

During his time in foster care, Jarrett has changed schools six times. One of these moves occurred three weeks before the end of the semester, and when his school records did not arrive at his new school in time, he was not granted permission to take final exams or complete final projects for his courses. Jarrett's GPA plummeted from 3.6 to 1.4 due to the missing coursework. Jarrett was also forced to retake courses that were called different names in different schools (e.g., "Health Education" and "Safety Education").

For more information, contact Maura McInerney at mmcinerney@elc-pa.org or Kate Burdick at kburdick@jlc.org

Education Law Center

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School Success for Students in Foster Care: Pennsylvania Youth Share their Stories

Rebecca

When Rebecca was living in a shelter, she earned four 0.75 credits in different subjects while attending a residential school. Yet, she was forced to repeat all four courses when she started in a new school. She is now a semester behind and will not be able to graduate with her class. When she changed schools, she had to start new subjects mid-year which she found confusing. She noted how hard it is to get good grades when you are constantly worried about moving.

Daniella

Daniella has been in care since she was 11. Since that time, she attended two neighborhood schools and five schools on-grounds at residential facilities. The schools in the residential facilities did not offer rigorous academic courses, and Daniella was behind academically when she returned to her home district. She was also told that she only had one credit in the system and had to repeat many courses – including Spanish I, English III, and Algebra – because she transferred schools in the middle of marking periods and did not earn credit for her work.

Maria

When Maria came into care at age 13, she moved to a new school district and left her friends behind. In 11th grade, she changed foster homes and started at a new school but her education records did not follow her. From September until April she was in the wrong classes because her new school did not have her IEP and did not know she needed learning support. Maria recently changed living placements again but is trying to stay in her current school.

Andrew

When Andrew was in middle school, he was enrolled in several on-grounds schools at residential treatment facilities. The coursework was very basic and he did not feel challenged because it was similar to work he had already completed. When Andrew transferred high schools in his junior year, he was forced to retake a history course he had previously completed because the courses had two different names, despite covering the same content.

Donna

Over the course of two years, Donna moved nine times and attended four or five different schools. Every time she started at a new school, she would have to wait a long time before she could enroll because her records were missing. Once, she was out of school for two months while she waited for her new school to enroll her. Her grades suffered, she had trouble making friends, and she even considered dropping out.

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School Success for Students in Foster Care: Pennsylvania Youth Share their Stories

Jessica

Jessica had to change schools several times due to changes in her foster care placement. She would have graduated a year ago if she had remained in the same school; instead, she was forced to change schools and could not earn the credits required by her current school to graduate. She hated changing schools because she had to work so hard to try to make friends and build close relationships with teachers.

Raquel

When Raquel's foster placement changed in high school, she talked to her principal and asked if she could continue attending the same school. While she was permitted to stay in the same school, she had to navigate transportation on her own and frequently arrived to school late due to travel complications. Fortunately, her principal worked with her to excuse her late arrivals because he understood the obstacles she faced in her home life. School stability and supports, such as peer mentoring, helped Raquel graduate on time.

Ciara

At age 16 when Ciara came into care, she transferred to an on-grounds school at a residential placement where she felt like she was given seventh grade work. When she later transferred to high school in the community, she struggled with the work at first because her previous school did not properly prepare her. However, thanks to the support of school staff, she eventually thrived. Ciara's guidance counselor also ensured all her credits transferred and that she was placed in the correct classes, and helped her apply to college.

Allison

Allison changed schools in the middle of the year and was enrolled in a math course that had the same name as a class she was taking in her previous school. However, she soon realized that the coursework was different between the two schools, and when she reached Algebra II her junior year, she felt she had missed out on important foundations. Thanks to a supportive adult who helped Allison complete the FAFSA and accompanied her to take college placement exams, Allison is now in college. Yet, she still feels like she is playing "catch-up" in math.

Fostering Success in Education:
National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care

January 2014

Why Education Matters to Children in Foster Care

When supported by strong practices and policies, positive school experiences can counteract the negative effects of abuse, neglect, separation, and lack of permanency experienced by the nearly 400,000 U.S. children and youth in foster care. Education provides opportunities for improved well-being in physical, intellectual, and social domains during critical developmental periods and supports economic success in adult life. A concerted effort by child welfare agencies, education agencies, and the courts could lead to significant progress in changing the consistent and disheartening picture about educational outcomes for children in foster care the research portrays. The promising programs and interventions highlighted below represent innovative efforts to address a wide range of factors influencing the disparities in education outcomes. With cross-system collaboration, we are positioned to build on what is being learned, bring about change, and promote success for all children and youth in foster care.

Fast facts from national and multi-state studies*

Number of children and youth in foster care on September 30, 2012	399,546
Average number of living arrangements during first foster care stay	2.8
Number of foster children of school age	249,107
Likelihood of being absent from school	2x that of other students
Percent of foster youth who change schools when first entering care	56%-75%
Percent of 17-18 year olds in care who have experienced 5+ school changes	34%
Likelihood of 17-18 year old foster youth having an out-of-school suspension	2x that of other students
Likelihood of 17-18 year old foster youth being expelled	3x that of other students
Average reading level of 17-18 year olds in foster care	7th grade
Likelihood of foster youth receiving special education	2.5 - 3.5x that of others
Percent of foster youth who complete high school by 18	50%
Percent of 17-18 year old foster youth who want to go to college	84%
Percent of foster youth who graduated from high school who attend college	20%
Percent of former foster youth who attain a bachelor's degree	2 - 9%

* All *Fast Facts* are referenced elsewhere in this document. These facts were compiled based on findings from multiple studies where a consistent picture is emerging that points to widespread deficits on a number of markers of educational progress or success. Data points represented here are either from national studies or multiple studies conducted in different states (in which case a range is provided for the data point).

National Foster Care Data

National data on the number of children and youth in foster care and their characteristics provide a context for the research on the educational experiences of children and youth in foster care. Table 1 provides data on the characteristics of children and youth in foster care.

Table 1.
Characteristics of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Number of children and youth in foster care on September 30, 2012	399,546	
Characteristics of children and youth in foster care on September 30, 2012	Number	Percentage
Age		
Young children (age 0–4)	132,845	33
School age children and youth (age 5–17)	249,107	62
Young adults (age 18–20)	17,302	4
Race/Ethnicity*		
White	166,195	42
Black	101,938	26
Hispanic (any race)	84,523	21
Other children and youth of color	34,371	9
Gender		
Male	209,131	52
Female	190,355	48

* Includes 3 percent whose race/ethnicity was unknown

School age children in foster care commonly experience a number of moves while in out-of-home care as shown in Figure 1. These changes can significantly impact their school experiences. Data from Chapin Hall's Center for State Child Welfare Data shows that among school-aged youth who entered care between 2005-2009, each experienced an average of 2.8 living arrangements by the end of 2011, including their initial out-of-home placement when removed from home.

Figure 1.
School-Age Children and Youth in Foster Care (5–17 Years) Who Entered Care Between 2005-2009:
Number of Children by Number of Living Arrangements
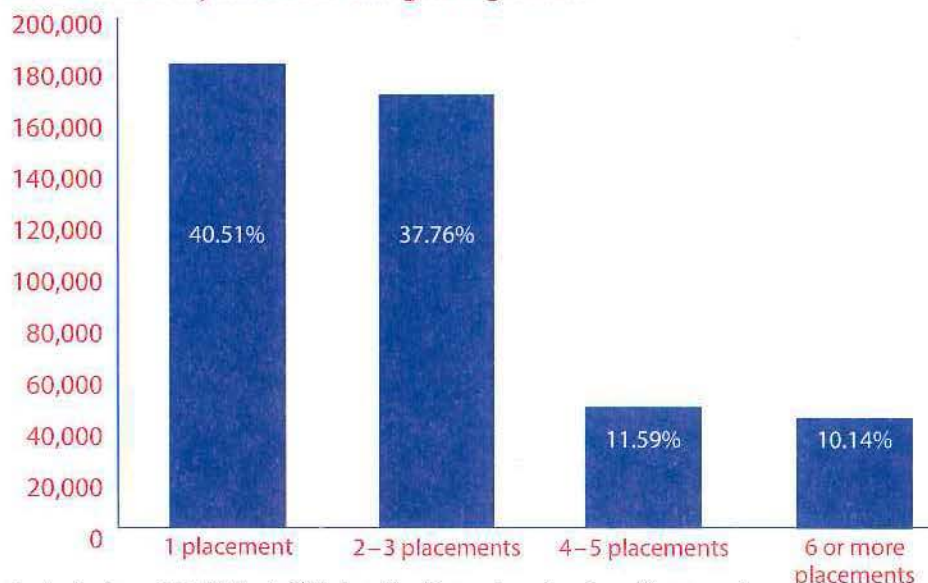
Source: The Center for State Child Welfare's 2011 data. The Center draws data from 29 states and two counties. Each youth who first entered care between 2005-2009 is represented in this data. The number of living arrangements was counted from entry date through the end of 2011.

The Research Findings

Lay the Foundation for a Strong Start for Young Children in Care

Research has consistently found a high need for early intervention and early childhood education services among young children in foster care as a result of their developmental, emotional and behavioral problems.[1, 2, 3, 4, 5] Data suggest that effective interventions exist to improve the performance of children in foster care when entering kindergarten. Yet, several studies indicate that many young children do not receive the early intervention or early childhood education services they need to address these problems.[6, 7, 8] Studies indicate that children in foster care as a group are less likely to be enrolled in Head Start than eligible, low income children.[9]

> **Promising Program:** The Education Equals Partnership is working to close the educational achievement gap between children in foster care and their peers in California by focusing on young children who are at early risk for school failure. For example, in Fresno County children under the age of five were not routinely accessing early intervention programs or preschool despite qualifying for services due to their high risk of developmental delays. The Fresno County child welfare agency assigned an education liaison to ensure that toddlers and preschool-age children received the assessments and services that they needed to thrive. These efforts have increased the percentage of children enrolled in preschool from 42% to 59% over the past two years. The Partnership is using data such as these to target their school readiness efforts.[10]

> **Promising Program:** A randomized control trial of the Kids in Transition to School (KITS) Program showed that children in foster care participating in this pre-kindergarten program were reported to show considerably less aggressive or oppositional classroom behavior than a comparison group.[11]

> **Promising Program:** A study from the University of Delaware evaluating the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) intervention, a 10 session parenting program that targets children's self-regulation, showed that pre-school aged children in foster care who received this intervention exhibited stronger cognitive flexibility and theory of mind skills than a comparison group of children in foster care.[12]

> **Promising Program:** In Illinois, all children between the ages of three and five receive a school readiness screening as part of the Integrated Assessment performed within 30 days of entering substitute care. Additionally, Early Childhood Procedures now require all children in care between the ages of three and five to be enrolled in an early childhood preschool program.[13]

Ensure School Stability

School changes are a significant problem for children and youth in foster care.[14, 15] Numerous studies have found that children in foster care frequently experience school changes.[16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21] These school changes often occur when children are initially removed from home, or when they move from one foster care living arrangement to another.[22, 23] The rate of school mobility for children in foster care is greater than for their non-foster care peers.[24, 25, 26] Children who change schools frequently make less academic progress than their peers, and each time they change schools, they fall farther and farther behind.[27] School mobility has negative effects on academic achievement and is associated with dropping out.[28] Children in foster care tend to score lower than their peers on standardized tests[29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34] and some of these differences predate their entry into foster care.[35] Research consistently shows that children who are highly mobile, including both children in foster care and children experiencing homelessness, perform significantly worse on standardized tests than stably housed children.[36, 37]

Children who experience frequent school changes may also face challenges in developing and sustaining supportive relationships with teachers or with peers.[38] Supportive relationships and a positive educational experience can be powerful contributors to the development of resilience and are vital components for healthy development and overall well-being.[39] In a national study of 1,087 foster care alumni, youth who had even one fewer change in living arrangement per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving foster care.[40]

> **Promising Policy:** The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 requires child welfare agencies to have a plan for "ensuring the educational stability of the child while in foster care," including the child remaining in the school in which the child is enrolled at time of placement unless it is not in the best interests of the child.[41]

Promising Practices: Many states have enacted legislation and developed policies to support maintaining school stability. Child welfare agencies have begun to use GIS mapping or other tools to locate living arrangements that allow a child to remain at the same school. Increasingly, child welfare agencies are collaborating with schools and others to make best interest decisions about school placement. Various tools and checklists have been created to assist with these important decisions. Child welfare agencies have also developed reimbursement mechanisms to provide transportation for children to remain in the same school.[42]

Enroll Students in School Quickly and Consistently

Delays in school enrollment can occur when a child's initial entry into foster care, or a subsequent change in living arrangement while in foster care, involves changing schools.[13, 44] These delays are often caused by failure to transfer records in a timely manner.[45, 46] Delays in school enrollment can negatively impact attendance and have a number of other adverse consequences such as students having to repeat courses previously taken, schools failing to address the special education needs of students, and students being enrolled in inappropriate classes.[47]

States have been using various strategies to ensure prompt enrollment when school changes are necessary. Some states have passed legislation or issued joint policies to streamline the process, including allowing for immediate enrollment without typically required documents, and creating timelines for prompt enrollment and records transfers. Many jurisdictions are using enrollment forms designed to facilitate communication between child welfare agencies and schools. For example, some child welfare agencies and schools have designated specific staff to serve as liaisons for children in care and assist with a smooth transition to a new school.

Promising Policy: In cases when remaining in the same school is not in the best interests of the child, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 requires that "the State agency and local educational agencies . . . provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the educational records of the child provided to the school."[48] States are now beginning to implement practices to meet this new federal mandate. The work of quickly enrolling foster children in school and ensuring better academic support has also been advanced by a recent amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This amendment, called the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), was signed into law in January of 2013, and makes it easier for child welfare professionals to access the educational records of the foster youth in their care.[49]

Promote Regular School Attendance

Studies show that children who enter foster care have often missed a substantial number of school days [50, 51] and that once in foster care, children and youth often have higher school absence rates than their non-foster care peers.[52, 53] The extent to which children experience absences from school appears to be influenced by the child's age, their pre-foster care experiences, and their experiences while in care,[54, 55] particularly when children are placed in congregate care.[56] One study found that school attendance problems increase as children in foster care enter adolescence.[75]

Promising Program: Allegheny County in Pennsylvania has established a data sharing program between the school system and the Department of Human Services that enables case workers and other child welfare staff to easily access the educational records of foster youth. This collaboration has led to the inclusion of an 'education page' in the electronic child welfare case record for each child involved in the child welfare system. One example of the benefit of access to shared data from the school district is case workers can be automatically alerted when a child has had three unexcused absences from school.[58]

Support Children to Prevent Serious Behavior Problems at School

A growing body of research documents the behavioral problems that children and youth in foster care experience – issues that impact their prospects for academic success– in the form of disciplinary infractions and other offenses.[59, 60, 61] Children and youth in foster care experience school suspensions and expulsions at higher rates than non-foster care peers.[62, 63, 64] Some educational experts believe that failure to address the needs of children in foster care leads to behavioral problems at school.[65]

In addressing behavioral problems with students in foster care, schools need to understand the impact of trauma on the lives of many children and youth in care. Research suggests that between half and two-thirds of all children are exposed to one or more adverse childhood experiences that can be trauma-inducing. Not surprisingly, children

in foster care experience trauma on a disproportionate basis.[66, 67] From medical centers to courts to child welfare systems, several evidence-supported and evidence-based approaches to address trauma have been developed and have proven to be effective. These approaches include trauma-informed systems (approaches that shape organizations to be more trauma-sensitive) and trauma-specific treatment interventions (implemented at the individual-level to address trauma and its symptoms).

> **Promising Practice:** In 2005, the Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Harvard Law School, and the Task Force on Children Affected by Domestic Violence launched Helping Traumatized Children Learn, a policy agenda for the state. Schools are encouraged to adopt a "Flexible Framework" for trauma-sensitive practices and supports at the school-wide level. More specifically, schools are asked to incorporate an understanding of trauma into strategic planning, academic programming, staff training and reviewing and implementing school discipline policies to ensure they reflect an understanding of the role of trauma in student behaviors.[68] Ensuring that schools are trauma-sensitive is a collaborative process that involves participation on behalf of parents, teachers, administrators, and staff. Furthermore, to close the gap between government policy and what works in schools, these same stakeholders must advocate all levels of government to include holistic school-wide trauma-sensitivity when developing policy.[69]

Meet Children's Special Education Needs with Quality Services

Research indicates that children in foster care experience rates of emotional and behavioral problems impacting their education that are higher than their peers who have not been involved in the child welfare system.[70] Studies consistently document that significant percentages of children in foster care have special education needs and/or are receiving special education services,[71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76] with several studies showing that children and youth in foster care are between 2.5 and 3.5 times more likely to be receiving special education services than their non foster care peers.[77, 78, 79] Research also suggests that children in foster care who are in special education tend to change schools more frequently, be placed in more restrictive educational settings, and have poorer quality education plans than their non-foster care peers in special education.[80] Studies conducted with California caregivers and school liaisons indicate that children in foster care need more intensive educational and support services to succeed in school.[81, 82] While screening foster youth for special education needs has been shown to increase the chance that youth receive needed services, one study showed that 84% of foster youth whose screenings indicated potential special education needs did not receive related services within 9-12 months.[83]

> **Promising Program:** A randomized trial of sixty-nine 16.5-17.5 year olds receiving both special education and foster care services found that 72% of youth involved in the *TAKE CHARGE* program had graduated high school or obtained a GED a year after the program compared to only 50% of the control group. The *TAKE CHARGE* intervention involves weekly coaching in self-determination and goal setting skills as well as quarterly mentoring by former foster youth.[84]

> **Promising Programs:** A number of states, including Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maine, Missouri, and Vermont have developed statewide surrogate parent programs to ensure that children in foster care and other students are assigned surrogate parents on a prompt basis. These programs train and maintain a pool of surrogate parents statewide to represent children with disabilities in the special education process. Such statewide programs are particularly critical for children living in group homes and other residential settings who will not have a foster parent to represent them in the special education process.

Support Students to Succeed and Graduate

Researchers have found that youth in foster care graduate at relatively low rates[85, 86] and are less likely to complete high school than their non-foster care peers.[87, 88, 89, 90, 91] This is troubling considering that high school graduates earn an average of $8,500 more per year.[92] When foster youth do complete high school, they often graduate later than expected.[93] Studies consistently show that children in foster care tend to experience high levels of grade retention[94, 95] and are more likely to be retained than are their non-foster care peers.[96, 97, 98, 99, 100] Research shows that because of grade retention, children in foster care are more likely to be old for their grade and be undercredited compared to their peers who have not been involved with the child welfare system.[101, 102] These results on retention and being old for grade are important because both are strong predictors of dropping out of school.[103] Research also suggests that young people in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school if they experience repeated changes in their foster

care living arrangements.[104, 105] Youth in foster care are more likely to complete high school with a GED than with a high school diploma.[106] Youth of color in foster care, in particular, are less likely to have a high school diploma and more likely to have a GED than youth in foster care who are non-Hispanic white.[107, 108, 109] These findings are of concern because despite the fact that having a GED can improve the life chances of individuals who do not graduate from high school, a GED is not equivalent to a regular high school diploma when it comes to labor market outcomes and post-secondary educational attainment. Compared to high school graduates, individuals who have a GED earn less, on average, and are less likely to graduate from college.[110]

> Promising Policy: Maine has enacted legislation to ensure that the goal of graduation does not remain beyond reach for children in foster care. This legislation assigns an educational liaison to each youth experiencing educational disruption and requires schools to develop an individualized graduation plan based on input from the student's prior school that identifies all credits and coursework to be completed. Schools must adopt a credit recognition policy that may include considering testing or written work to demonstrate competency and ensures that partial credits count towards graduation. The legislation also permits students to obtain a course waiver if a student has previously completed a course which is similar or demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter. The legislation furthermore provides access to credit recovery and remedial programs as well as access to a state-issued diploma for students who meet state graduation standards but are unable to obtain a school-district-issued high school diploma.[111]

> Promising Program: The *Graduation Success* program provided by *Treehouse* in Washington state works with youth in care in middle and high school to create individualized plans for each youth in care to work towards academic success. *Graduation Success* monitors students' academics, behavior, and attendance while connecting students with academic resources such as tutoring, college counseling, and career preparation. *Graduation Success* also works with students facing obstacles common amongst youth in care such as transitioning between schools, retrieving course credit, and addressing special education needs. Of the 39 high school seniors involved in *Graduation Success* in the 2012-2013 school year, 24 graduated and eight others have an active plan for completing high school.[112]

Support Transitions to College

Although studies indicate that youth in foster care have college aspirations,[113, 114] numerous studies have found lower college enrollment rates[115, 116] and lower college completion rates[117, 118, 119, 120] among young people who have been in foster care than among other young adults. While one study suggests that former foster youth who do enroll in college are confident about their academic abilities and optimistic about their chance of success in college, the same study indicates that former foster youth lag behind their college peers in academic performance.[121] Research suggests that enrollment in college is more likely when young people are allowed to remain in care until age 21[122] or receive mentoring services.[123] Research indicates that graduation from college is more likely when young people have had fewer foster care living arrangement moves.[124] A few studies have examined the relationship between postsecondary educational attainment and race/ethnicity among young people who had been in foster care and the findings have been mixed.[125, 126, 127, 128] Studies have found that financial difficulties, needing to work, and concerns about housing are among the barriers that prevent former foster youth from pursuing postsecondary education.[129, 130] Overcoming these barriers is important because increasing postsecondary educational attainment among youth in foster care would increase their average work-life earnings. With a four year degree, youth in foster care could expect to earn approximately $481,000 more, on average, over the course of their work-life than if they had only a high school diploma. Even if they did not graduate with a degree, completing any college would increase their work-life earnings, on average, by $129,000.[131]

> Promising Programs: College enrollment during the first year after expected high school graduation among youth in foster care in Washington State rose from 16% in the high school years of 2005–06 to 20% in 2008–09. The researcher credits this improvement to a number of programs implemented or expanded in Washington State over the past decade that provide educational support to foster youth. These programs offer services such as educational advocacy and financial assistance such as scholarships designed to keep foster youth enrolled in school, increase the high school graduation rate, and improve college enrollment rates.[132]

> Promising Programs: Campus support programs, which provide college students who aged out of foster care with an array of financial, academic, social/emotional, and logistical (e.g., housing) supports to help them stay in school and graduate, have the potential to increase postsecondary educational attainment among youth formerly in foster care.[133] Although additional research is needed to evaluate their impact on education outcomes, the number of such programs has grown rapidly in recent years, especially in California and Michigan.

Promising Programs: Some California counties, including Santa Clara and Fresno, are increasingly linking youth in foster care to college preparation programs such as AVID (Advancement Via Individualized Determination), which targets students in the academic middle who are likely to be the first member of their family to attend college.[134] Research has found that students who participate in AVID and AVID-like programs out-perform their peers on standardized tests, attendance, and credit accumulation. In addition, their grade point averages remained high despite enrollment in more rigorous courses.[135]

Support Caregivers

From increasing learning to reducing problem behaviors at school, research shows that effective parenting techniques used by caregivers lead to improved academic outcomes for children and youth. Offering training to foster parents in effective tutoring and behavior improvement methods is an important next step in improving the quality of education for foster youth.[136]

Promising Program: A Belgium study of 49 children in foster care suggests that supportive parenting was associated with less problem behavior over a two year period, while increases in negative parenting strategies led to increased problem behavior over the same period.[137]

Promising Program: A study of youth in foster care in Ontario showed that training foster parents in tutoring methods led to significant gains in reading and math skills among 6-13 year olds. These positive effects were seen despite the fact that in only approximately half of all cases did the research team considered the foster parents' tutoring to strictly adhere to the intervention guidelines.[138]

Conclusion

There is overwhelming evidence that children and youth in care are a vulnerable population in our public education system. The achievement gap between youth in care and the general population is staggering, with youth in care trailing their peers in standardized test performance, high school graduation rates, and likelihood of attaining post-secondary education. There is also a large evidence base to explain many of the factors that lead to this unacceptable disparity. What the field lacks are enough viable interventions and the capacity to evaluate new and promising solutions. While this document is not comprehensive in its scope, it highlights a number of promising interventions and programs from around the country that are improving educational outcomes for youth in foster care.

We are accustomed to thinking about the educational achievement of vulnerable children as an issue of the individual child. It is also a school-level and system-level issue, raising important questions around how to foster collaboration between the education and child welfare systems and design interventions to enhance the education of the most vulnerable children. To ensure that all youth in care are afforded opportunities to learn and develop the skills necessary to be successful in life, the field must continue to invest in developing the tools, materials, ideas, practices, and policies that support the work of the caseworkers, teachers, judges, lawyers, parents, and foster parents working to improve the educational experiences of these children. We must also invest in research so that we are building a body of evidence of the effectiveness of these approaches and holding ourselves accountable for improving the trajectories of children in foster care. The resources expended to improve educational outcomes for these children is a worthwhile investment in the improved life outcomes of foster youth that in turn strengthens our communities, economy, and society.

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ENDNOTES

Early Childhood Education

[1] Data from the National Study of Child and Adolescent Well Being (NSCAW) was used to determine the extent of developmental problems for 268 children who were 1 to 5 years old and had been in foster care for approximately one year at the time the sample was drawn. Researchers found that 57% had a developmental problem in at least one of three domains: 47% had cognitive delays, 49% had language delays, and 52% had behavioral problems. Forty-two percent of the caregivers of these children reported that their child had been assessed for learning problems, special needs, or developmental disabilities, and 23% had been told that they had a learning problem, special need, or developmental disability. However, only half of the children identified as having learning problem, special need, or developmental disability had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Thirty five percent of these children had been referred by their caseworker for an assessment to identify learning problems or developmental disabilities, 7% had been referred for special education services and 20% had been referred for services to address an emotional, behavioral or attention problem. At the same time, 39% of their caseworkers indicated that the child needed an assessment to identify learning problems or developmental disabilities, 22% indicated that the child needed services for an emotional, behavioral or attention problem and.14% indicated that the child needed special education services. In addition to the children for whom a referral had been made, another 2% to 3% were already receiving special education services or other services to address a developmental problem (Ward, et al., 2009).

[2] One study that analyzed data for foster children ages two to 24 months old found that nearly six in ten were at high risk for neurological or cognitive developmental impairments (Vandivere, et al., 2003).

[3] In a study of Illinois children who entered foster care without first receiving in-home services, researchers found that over one third of the 3 to 5 year olds showed evidence of a possible developmental delay in at least one of the following domains: visual-motor adaptive, language and cognition, fine or gross motor, personal-social, or problem solving. Fourteen percent of the 3- to 5-year olds were identified as having behavior problems ranging from lack of focus to aggressiveness (Smithgall, et al., 2010).

[4] An Oregon Social Learning Center study found that foster children entering kindergarten showed large pre-reading skills deficits, with average scores in the 30th to 40th percentile (Pears, Heywood, Kim, Fisher, 2011).

[5] A study using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being divided a sample of infants who entered foster care into three groups based on their living arrangement 66 months after the initial baseline survey of children in the study. The three groups were children who remained in foster care, children who were reunited with their birth parents, and children who were adopted. The group of children still in foster care at age 5-6 showed worse developmental outcomes than the other two groups for measures of social skills, math, and reading (Lloyd & Barth, 2011).

[6] A study that analyzed data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well Being for 641 children who were less than six years old and in foster care when the first wave of data was collected found that had nearly half had scores on measures of cognitive, behavioral, and social skills that would make them eligibility for early intervention services. However, their caregivers reported that just over one third of these children had received any type of service to address their developmental and behavior problems during the past year. Children at risk for delays in 2 or more domains were more likely to have received services than children at risk in 0 or 1, and children ages 3 to 5 were more than twice as likely to have received services as children ages 0 to 2 (Stahmer et al., 2005).

[7] In a study of Illinois children who entered foster care without first receiving in-home services, researchers found that while over one third of the 3 to 5 year olds showed evidence of a possible developmental delay in at least one domain, only 14% were receiving early intervention services when they entered foster care (Smithgall, et al., 2010).

[8] The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) determined that 19 percent of children birth through age 5 not yet in kindergarten who were in families with a household income of $25,000 or less participated on a weekly basis in Head Start or Early Head Start.

[9] The National Study of Child and Adolescent Well Being indicates that only 6 percent of children in foster care under age 6 are enrolled in Head Start (Vandivere, 2003). Between 1991 and 2005, the percentage of all children ages three to four participating in a Head Start program remained fairly constant, ranging between 9 and 11 percent, and was at 9 percent in 2005 (Child Trends, 2010).

[10] Shea, Weinberg, Zetlin, 2011.

[11] Pears, Kim, Fisher, 2012.

[12] Lewis-Morrarty, Dozier, Bernard, Terracciano, Moore, 2012.

[13] Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Procedures 314, Educational Services, February 27, 2007 – P.T. 2007.03, retrieved on Nov. 12, 2013 from www.state.il.us/dcfs/docs/ocfp/procedures_314.pdf.

School Mobility

[14] Four focus groups conducted in California with representatives from child welfare, education and other agencies as well as foster youth and caregivers identified living arrangement instability resulting in frequent school changes as a major problem (Zeitlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2006).

[15] A focus group consisting of schools liaisons from one California school district identified the lack of stability in the lives of foster children, including school stability, as the most serious problem facing students in foster care (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2010).

[16] More than one-third of the 17 and 18 year old foster youth in the Midwest Study had experienced five or more school changes related to their being in foster care (Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004).

[17] Two thirds of the Casey National Alumni Study participants (ages 20 to 51) had attended three or more different elementary schools and one third reported having attended at least five. Nearly two-thirds of the Northwest Alumni Study participants (ages 20 to 33) had experienced seven or more school changes during their elementary and secondary school years (Pecora, et al., 2006).

[18] Foster youth who entered an educationally oriented residential facility between October 2001 and June 2005 and had been in foster care for an average of nearly seven years reported a mean of 6 school changes (after accounting for normative changes) while they were in care (Sullivan et al., 2010).

[19] A study of foster children in 7 states found that more than half changed schools upon entering foster care (data were not available for 15%) but more than two thirds remained in the same school during the six-month study period (data were not available for 4%) (National Foster Care Review Coalition, 2009 [data on school changes after foster care entry were only available for 28% of children]).

[20] In a New York City study, three quarters of the 8 to 21 year old foster youth who were interviewed in 2000 had not remained in their school of origin upon entering foster care and almost two thirds had transferred to a new school in the middle of the school year (Advocates for Children of New York, 2000).

[21] PolicyLab's Children's Stability and Well-being (CSAW) study found that study participants in Philadelphia, on average, attended 2.7 different schools within the two year study period (Zorc, O'Reilly, Matone, Long, Watts, Rubin, 2013).

[22] A study by the Center for Social Services Research and the Institute for Evidence-Based Change showed that three-quarters of California foster youth changed schools the year that they entered foster care compared to only 21% of the comparison group (Frerer, Sosenko, Pellegrin, Manchik, Horowitz, 2013).

[23] New York City children who entered foster care between 1995 and 1999 were more than twice as likely to have changed schools during the year after entering foster care as compared to the year before (Conger & Rebeck, 2001).

[24] During the 2001 through 2003 school years, elementary school-aged foster children in the Chicago Public Schools were more than twice as likely to change schools as students who had no history of child welfare services involvement. School mobility was especially high among children who entered foster care during the school year, with over two-thirds experiencing a school change. Among those children who entered foster care in 2008 without first receiving in-home services, over one-half of the 6- to 10-year olds and almost two-thirds of the 11- to 17-year-olds had changed schools at least once within the past two years (excluding normative transitions from elementary to high school) (Smithgall, Jarpe-Ratner, & Walker, 2010).

[25] In a study conducted in San Mateo County, CA, between the 2003-04 and 2007-08 academic years, 17% of the dependent youth (i.e., youth in foster care as well as youth who remained in their home or were returned to home while in the court's custody) left school midyear compared to only 2% of non-dependent youth in the same school districts (Castrechini, 2009).

[26] In a WestEd study of California foster youth, two-thirds of foster youth stayed in the same school over the course of a school year compared to 90% of non-foster youth from low socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, approximately 10% of foster youth went to three or more schools over the course of the school year as opposed to only 1% of non-foster youth from low socio-economic backgrounds (Barrat & Berliner, 2013).

[27] In one study, it was found that with each school change, a child falls further behind. This outcome was found even

after family socioeconomic status and other demographic factors associated with both academic achievement and school mobility were taken into account (Kerbow, 1996).

[28] A meta-analysis of the relationship between school mobility and school performance found negative effects on both reading and math achievement as well as positive effects on dropping out (Reynolds, Chen, & Herbers, 2009).

[29] Dependent youth (i.e., youth in foster care as well as youth who had remained in their homes or been returned to homes while in the court's custody) in the San Mateo County study were more than twice as likely not to be proficient in the English language and more than twice as likely not to be proficient in math as their non-dependent peers. The dependent youth also earned, on average, 14 fewer credits per year (Castrechini, 2009).

[30] Compared to Chicago Public Schools students who had no history or child welfare services involvement, foster children in grades 3 through 8 were, on average, more than one year behind in reading in 2003, although controlling for demographic and school characteristics reduced the gap to just over half a year. The foster children were also more likely to score in the bottom quartile on the reading portion of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), but 44% had also scored in the bottom quartile prior to their placement in foster care (Smithgall, et al., 2004).

[31] In 2000, Washington State foster children and youth in grades 3, 6 and 9 scored 16 to 20 percentile points below their 3rd, 6th and 9th grade peers who were not in foster care on state achievement tests for reading and math (Burley & Halpern, 2001).

[32] On average, the 17 and 18 year old Midwest Study participants were reading at a seventh grade level (Courtney, et al., 2004).

[33] A study by the Center for Social Services Research and the Institute for Evidence-Based Change showed that over a three-year period, California foster youth performed worse than a comparison group on standardized tests in math and English, and saw fewer gains over this period (Frerer, Sosenko, Pellegrin, Manchik, Horowitz, 2013).

[34] A California study conducted by WestEd showed that the standardized testing achievement gap between foster youth and the general population is similar to that seen with English language learners and students with disabilities. Furthermore, the test scores for foster youth were consistently worse than those of students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Barrat & Berliner, 2013).

[35] A Chapin Hall study of children in Illinois who enter foster care without first receiving in-home services found that among children ages 6 to 10 with at least one school change in the past 2 years, 36% were behind or underperforming compared to 56% of those with no school change. Of children ages 11 to 17, 56% were behind or underperforming as compared to 61% of children with no school changes. The researchers concluded that in many cases, children who were doing well before transferring continue to do well after transferring and those who were struggling continue to struggle (Smithgall, Jarpe-Ratner, & Walker, 2010).

[36] Studies have found that highly mobile children score lower than stably housed children on standardized tests in reading, spelling, and math (Obradovic, et al., 2009; Rafferty, et al., 2004; Rubin, et al., 1996).

[37] A review of studies on school mobility and education success found that moves occurring in elementary school and high school were associated with more detrimental effects on reading and math achievement than moves in middle school (Reynolds, Chen & Herbers, 2009).

[38] South et al., 2007.

[39] *Promoting Development of Resilience Among Young People in Foster Care,* Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2012.

[40] Pecora et al., 2006; this analysis was limited to foster youth who were at least 17 years and 3 months old when they left care.

[41] H.R. 6893 (110th): *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008.*

[42] To learn more details about states using these various strategies, see Legal Center for Foster Care and Education (2011). Fostering Connections Implementation Toolkit. www.fostercareandeducation.org/portals/0/dmx/2013/02/file_20130221_140202_KrW_0.pdf

School Enrollment

[43] One-fifth of the 11 to 17 year olds of the Illinois children who entered foster care without first receiving in-home services were either not enrolled in school or had been absent for so long that they were effectively not enrolled. Many of these youth had become disengaged from school and remained disengaged after entering foster care (Smithgall, et al., 2010).

[44] Approximately half of the caregivers of school-aged foster children in nine San Francisco Bay Area counties who were interviewed in 2000 had to enroll their foster child in school, and 12% of those caregivers had

experienced enrollment delays of at least two weeks (Choice, et al., 2001 [response rate; 28%]).

[45] Forty-two percent of the 8 to 21 year New York City foster youth who were interviewed in 2000 had experienced a delay in school enrollment while in foster care, and nearly half of those who experienced a delay attributed it to lost or misplaced school or immunization records (Advocates for Children in New York, 2000).

[46] More than three quarters of the California group home operators who were surveyed in 2000 reported that educational records for foster children in group homes are either "frequently" or "almost always" incomplete, 60% reported that the transfer of educational records is "frequently" or "almost always" delayed when youth change schools or group home placements, three quarters reported that youth recently placed in group homes experience long delays when attempting to enroll in public school, and more than two thirds reported that educational placement decisions were "frequently" or "almost always" compromised by incomplete school records (Parrish, et al. 2001 [response rate: 48%]).

[47] Failure to immediately enroll foster children in their new school when they change schools during the school year was a major problem identified by the four focus groups conducted in California with representatives from child welfare, education and other agencies as well as foster youth and caregivers (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2006).

[48] H.R. 6893 (110th): *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*.

[49] S. 3472 (112th): *Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA)*. (2012).

School Attendance

[50] A Chapin Hall study of children in Illinois who enter foster care without first receiving in-home services found that about one-third (30.2%) of the 6- to 10-year old children entering foster care missed more than 10 days of school during the past semester or grading period. Some had missed as many as 40 days. Family problems were the principal reasons that children of this age group missed school. Poor school attendance was more prevalent than for younger children. Over half of the children ages 11 to 17 who were enrolled in school at the time they entered foster care had experienced excessive absences (10 days or more) during the previous semester or grading period. The principal reasons for school absences were family problems, running away and hospitalizations (Smithgall, Jarpe-Ratner, & Walker, 2010).

[51] The CSAW study in Philadelphia showed that students had an average 31% daily absence rate in the two months leading up to placement in foster care (Zorc, O'Reilly,

Matone, Long, Watts, Rubin, 2013).

[52] A study in San Mateo County, California found that the average absence rate for children and youth in foster care was 12% compared to only 6% for non-dependent youth. The percentage leaving school mid-year was 17% for children and youth in foster care compared to only 2% for non-dependent youth (Castrechini, 2009).

[53] Children participating in the CSAW study were absent for twice as many days during the school year as the overall student body (Zorc, O'Reilly, Matone, Long, Watts, Rubin, 2013).

[54] One study found a small positive relationship between school transfers and attendance rates for children entering foster care. In this study, the attendance rates of many of the children improved after entry to care. The greatest gains were seen in children who were younger, who remained in care for at least an entire semester after placement, children with stable placements, children placed with foster families or kinship families, and those who entered care as a result of abuse or neglect. Declines or small gains in attendance were seen with children with short stay and those who stayed longer. Higher attendance rates increased math and reading schools, and school transfers had no effect on reading scores and depressed math scores slightly (Conger & Rebeck, 2001).

[55] Among participants in the CSAW study, children who found permanent placement within 45 days of entering foster care were absent less than other foster children. Children with unstable placements after nine months in care were absent 38% more than children who found permanent placement within 45 days (Zorc, O'Reilly, Matone, Long, Watts, Rubin, 2013).

[56] One study found that children and youth in congregate care entered care with a far lower attendance rate prior to placement in foster care than children in kinship homes prior to placement (69 percent compared to 80 percent) and that attendance rate for children in congregate care decreased by almost 5 percentage points by the semester after foster care placement (Conger & Rebeck, 2001).

[57] A recent study of children placed in treatment foster care (designed for children in foster care with intensive mental, emotional, behavioral, or medical needs) found that these children had attendance rates of at least 90% over the course of two years but the proportion of children with school attendance below 90% for two consecutive years climbed significantly at around age 13. Children in independent living programs had lower attendance ratios than children in other types of services (Larson, 2010).

[58] Skakalski, Murphy, Whitehill (2013).

School Behavior Problems

[59] In a study of Illinois children who entered foster care without first receiving in-home services found that nearly half of the 6 to 10 year olds demonstrated behaviors that were deemed problematic by the school and that two-thirds of the 11 to 17 year olds exhibited problem behaviors, received disciplinary action, or both (Smithgall, Jarpe-Ratner, & Walker, 2010).

[60] During the 2003-2004 academic year, foster children and youth in the Chicago Public Schools were more than twice as likely as students who had no history of child welfare services involvement to have experienced at least one disciplinary code infraction as students who had no history of child welfare services involvement. Moreover, just over half of the foster youth ages 11 and older and 70% of the foster children ages 6 to 10 who experienced a disciplinary code infraction were involved in at least one violent offense (e.g., fighting, bullying, or battery (Smithgall, et al., 2005).

[61] According to their self-reports, nearly three quarters of the 15- to 19-year old foster youth in a suburban Missouri county who had been referred for independent living preparation had been suspended, 16% had been expelled, 29% had been involved in a physical fight with other students and 28% had been involved in a verbal fight with a teacher since they entered 7th grade (McMillen et al., 2003).

[62] The 17- and 18-year old Midwest Study participants were more than twice as likely to report having been given an out-of-school suspension and over three times more likely to report having been expelled than a nationally representative sample of 17 and 18 year olds (Courtney, et al., 2004).

[63] A study in San Mateo County found that close to one-third of youth in foster care for more than 2 years (31.8%) had experienced a suspension and 4.1% of these youth had been expelled. Children in foster care for shorter (less than 6 months) and longer (more than 2 years) periods of time were more likely to be suspended or expelled (Castrechini, 2009).

[64] Twelve percent of a random sample of Los Angeles County foster children ages 6 to 12 had been suspended and 3% had been expelled. Just over one third of the foster children were rated by their teachers as having classroom behavior problems in the clinical range, only 16% of the foster children who rated by their teachers as having behavior problems were also rated as having behavior problems by their foster parent (Zima, et al., 2000).

[65] One focus group consisting of educational advocates and another consisting of school liaisons, all from California, suggested that failure to adequately address the needs of foster children led to emotional and behavior problems with which schools do not know how cope (Zeitlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2010).

[66] Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks (1998).

[67] Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello (2007).

[68] Cole, O'Brien, Gadd, Ristuccia, Wallace, & Gregory (2005).

[69] Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia (2013).

Special Education

[70] A study of special education students in one large city and 32 county school districts were over three times more likely to be diagnosed with an emotional disturbance if they had a history of foster care placement than children who were poor but had no child welfare services involvement (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2009).

[71] Just over half of the 11 to 14 year old foster youth and 45% of the 15 to 18 year old foster youth in Lucas County (Toledo), Ohio were identified as having special education needs. Just under one fifth of the 5 to 10 year olds were identified as having special education needs but data were missing for nearly one third (Theiss, 2010).

[72] Though limited in scope, a study of foster children in 7 states found that two-thirds of the children with special education needs (data were not available for 10%) were receiving special education services (National Foster Care Review Coalition, 2010).

[73] Nearly half of California children in foster care who were placed in group homes or licensed children's institutions (LCI) in 1999 had a special education classification, with emotional disturbance and learning disabilities being the most common. Moreover, these special education students were over 10 times more likely to be enrolled in non-public schools special education foster children who were not in group homes or LCI's. Some of this difference can be explained by the fact that more than half of the latter were diagnosed with a learning disability and fewer than one in ten were diagnosed with an emotional disturbance (Parrish, et al., 2001).

[74] Nearly half of the 17 and 18 year old Midwest Study participants reported that they had ever been placed in a special education class (Courtney, et al., 2004). Thirty-eight percent of the Casey National Alumni Study participants reported that they had been enrolled in a special education class (Pecora, et al., 2006).

[75] A study of the educational experiences of foster youth who were, on average, 17.5 years old and had been in

foster care for an average of 8 years as of December 1998 found that one third had been placed in special education classes (Shinn, 2003; the response rate was only 38%).

[76] More than one third of the Bay Area caregivers of school-aged foster children in who were interviewed in 2000 reported that their foster child was receiving special education services. However, over two thirds identified their foster child as having some type of special need, with behavioral and emotional problems, learning disabilities, and medical or health problems being the most common (Choice, et al., 2001; the response rate for the telephone survey was only 28%).

[77] Dependent youth (i.e., youth in foster care as well as youth who had remained in their homes or been returned to homes while in the court's custody) in the San Mateo County study were 2.5 times more likely to be receiving special education services as non-dependent youth in the same school districts (Castrechini, 2009).

[78] In 2000, Washington State foster children in grades 3, 6 and 9 were two and a half to three times more likely to be enrolled in special education programs than the average 3rd, 6th and 9th grader (Burley & Halpern, 2001).

[79] In 2003, foster children in the Chicago Public Schools were three and a half times more likely to have a special education classification than students in grades one through eight who had no history of child welfare services involvement even after controlling for demographic and school characteristics. Moreover, foster children who had a special education classification were much more likely than students with a special education classification but no history of child welfare services involvement to be classified as having an emotional or behavioral disorder (Smithgall, et al., 2004).

[80] Children in foster care and in special education in a large urban Oregon school district changed schools more frequently and were in more restrictive settings than special education students who were not in foster care. Moreover, the Individualized Education Plans of the foster youth were of poorer quality and less likely to include goals related to postsecondary education or to the development of independent living skills than those of special education students not in foster care. The foster youth were also less likely than other special education students to have an advocate present during their transition planning meetings (Geenen & Powers, 2006).

[81] Two focus groups consisting of California foster parents and relative caregivers identified the failure of schools to acknowledge their children's needs for services to address learning or behavior problems and to provide their children with more intensive supports as ongoing

problems (Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2010).

[82] California school liaisons who participated in the focus group suggested that some of the problems that resulted in foster children being referred for special education services may be due to the emotional trauma or frequent school changes they have experienced rather than to learning disabilities (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2010).

[83] Petrenko, Culhane, Garrido, Taussig, 2011.

[84] Powers, Geenen, Powers, Pommier-Satya, Turner, Dalton, Drummond, Swank, 2012.

High School Completion

[85] Just over one third of Washington State foster youth who exited care at age 18 or older between January and June 2000 had a high school diploma or GED (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2001).).

[86] A study of the educational experiences of Illinois foster youth who were, on average, 17.5 years old and had been in foster care for an average of 8 years found that one fifth had dropped out of school (Shinn, 2003; the survey response rate, however, was only 38%)

[87] Based on a review of studies conducted between 1995 and 2005, Wolanin (2005) estimated that about half of foster youth complete high school by age 18 compared to 70% of youth in the general population and that GED completion rates for youth in foster care ranged between 5% and 29%.

[88] Washington State 11th graders who had a history of foster care placement and enrolled in 12th grade the following year were one third less likely to complete high school at the end of that 12th grade year than their peers who had no foster care history (Burley & Halpern, 2001).

[89] Fourteen year old Chicago Public Schools students who were in foster care in September 1998 were half as likely to have graduated from high school five years later as their peers who had no history of child welfare services involvement. In addition, the likelihood of dropping out was nearly twice as high for the youth in foster care, even after controlling for demographic characteristics, school characteristics and academic performance in elementary school (Smithgall, et al., 2004).

[90] By age 21, 77% of the Midwest Study participants had a high school diploma or GED compared to 89% of 21 year olds in a nationally representative sample (Courtney, et al., 2007).

[91] A California study conducted by WestEd shows that the graduation rate for 12th-grade foster youth was 58% compared to 84% for all 12th-grade students in the state.

The graduation rate for foster youth is the lowest of any at-risk group examined in the study (Barrat & Berliner, 2013).

[92] This report calculated that raising the graduation rate of one year's cohort of youth aging out of foster care to the national average would result in increased earnings and tax revenues totaling over $2 billion and an estimated impact in excess of $61,000,000 in the first year alone. (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2013).

[93] Twelve percent of Washington State students who had been in foster care at any time after their 16th birthday and were expected to graduate at the end of the 2004-05 to 2006-07 school years graduated from high school one year later than expected (Burley, 2009).

[94] Nearly 45% of the 8 to 21 year children and youth in foster care in New York City public schools who were interviewed in 2000 reported being retained at least once (Advocates for Children, 2000).

[95] More than one third of the Casey National Alumni Study participants reported that they had repeated a grade (Pecora, et al., 2006).

[96] Dependent youth (i.e., youth in foster care as well as youth who had remained in their homes or been returned to homes while in the court's custody) in the San Mateo County study were twice as likely to be retained as non-dependent youth in the same school districts (Castrechini, 2009).

[97] Between 2000 and 2003, elementary school-aged foster children in the Chicago Public Schools were retained at nearly twice the rate as students with no history of child welfare services involvement (Smithgall, et al, 2004).

[98] In 2000, children in foster care in Washington State were, on average, about twice as likely as their 3rd, 6th, and 9th grade peers who were not in foster care to have been in the same grade for more than one year (Burley & Halpern, 2001).

[99] Thirteen percent of a random sample of Los Angeles County foster children ages 6 to 12 who were in care between July 1996 and March 1998 had repeated at least one grade (Zima, et al., 2000).

[100] The 17 and 18 year old Midwest Study participants were 1.7 times more likely to report that they had repeated a grade than a nationally representative sample of 17 and 18 year olds (Courtney, et al., 2004).

[101] In 2003, foster children in the Chicago Public Schools were nearly twice as likely to be old for grade as third through eighth graders with no history of children welfare services involvement even after controlling for demographic and school characteristics (Smithgall, et al., 2004).

[102] Almost half of the foster youth who entered an educationally oriented residential facility between October 2001 and June 2005 were, based on their age, behind their expected grade in school and nearly one third reported having repeated a class due to failing grades (Sullivan et al., 2010).

[103] Alexander, Entwhistle & Kabbani, 2001; Jimerson, 2001.

[104] The odds of completing high school were 1.8 times higher for foster care alumni in the Casey National Alumni Study if they had experienced one fewer placement change per year and 3.1 times higher if they had experienced two fewer placement changes per year (Pecora et al., 2006; this analysis was limited to foster youth who were at least 17 years and 3 months old when they left care).

[105] Researchers reported that the odds of graduating from high school among foster care alumni in the Northwest Study were 4.6 times higher if they had experienced a low rate of placement change (i.e., less than .5 per year) and 2.7 times higher if they had experienced a moderate rate of placement change (i.e., .50 to .99 per year) than if they had experienced a high rate of placement change (i.e., at least 1 per year). In addition, their odds of graduating from high school were twice as high if they had experienced 6 or fewer school changes than if they had experienced 10 or more (Pecora et al., 2009).

[106] The rate of high school completion for foster care alumni in both the Northwest Alumni Study and the Casey National Alumni Study was comparable to the 2008 high school completion rate of 85% among 18 to 24 year olds in the general population. However, 29% of the Northwest Alumni Study participants and 19% of the Casey National Alumni Study completed high school with a GED rather than a high school diploma compared to 6% of 18 to 24 year olds in the general population (Pecora, et al, 2005; Pecora, et al., 2006).

[107] American Indian/Alaskan Native foster care alumni were about as likely to complete high school as non-Hispanic White alumni in the Casey National Alumni Study but were significantly less likely to have a high school diploma and significantly more likely to have a GED (O'Brien, et al., 2010).

[108] Although the African American foster care alumni in the Casey National Alumni Study were about as likely to have completed high school as their non-Hispanic White counterparts, they were significantly less likely to have completed high school with a regular diploma (Harris, et

al., 2009).

[109] Likewise, African American foster care alumni in the Northwest Study were significantly more likely to have completed high school than their non-Hispanic White counterparts, but significantly less likely to have a high school diploma (Dworsky, et al., 2010).

[110] Boesel, Alsalam, & Smith, 1998; Heckman, Humphries, Mader, 2010; Bozick & DeLuca, 2005: Grubb, 1999; Smith, 2003.

[111] Maine Public Law Chapter 451, H.P. 1296 – L.D. 1860. An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force To Engage Maine's Youth Regarding Successful School Completion. Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §257, sub-§4.

[112] Treehouse, *Agency-Wide 2012-2013 School Year Report*.

Post Secondary Education

[113] Eighty four percent of the 17 and 18 year old Midwest Study participants aspired to complete some college and 71 percent aspired to graduate (Courtney, et al., 2004).

[114] Seventy percent of the 15 to 19 year old foster youth in Missouri who had been referred for independent living preparation aspired to attend college (McMillan et al., 2003).

[115] Based on a review of studies from 1995 through 2000, Wolanin (2005) estimated that approximately 20% of foster youth who graduate from high school attend college compared to 60% of high school graduates in the general population.

[116] Only 11% of the youth in foster care in Washington State who were in the high school classes of 2006 and 2007 were enrolled in college during both the first and second year after expected high school graduation. By comparison, 42% of Washington State high school students in the class of 2006 enrolled in college during the first year after they were expected to graduate from high school and 35% were enrolled in college during both the first and second year after graduating from high school (Burley, 2009).

[117] Forty three percent of foster care alumni in the Northwest Alumni Study had completed any postsecondary education and almost half of the foster care alumni in the Casey National Alumni Study participants had completed at least some college. However, only 2% of the former and 9% of the latter had at least a bachelor's degree (Pecora, et al., 2006; Pecora, et al., 2005).

[118] 47% of participants in the Midwest study had completed at least one year of college at age 26, but only 8% had obtained a postsecondary degree. By comparison, 46% of 26 year olds in the nationally representative National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health sample had obtained a two or four year degree. (Courtney et al., 2011).

[119] Foster care alumni who entered postsecondary education in 1995 and were first-time undergraduates, were as likely to attend four-year institutions as other first time undergraduates and more likely to be enrolled fulltime. However, they were half as likely to have earned a degree or certificate during the six-year study period as their non-foster peers (Davis, 2006).

[120] One study using administrative data from Michigan State University showed that former foster youth were more likely to drop out of college compared to a comparison group of youth who were never in foster care but were from low-income backgrounds and were first generation college students. The study showed that 34% of former foster youth dropped out before earning a degree compared to 18% for the comparison group (Day, Dworsky, Fogarty, Damashek, 2011).

[121] In this exploratory cross-sectional survey, 81 former foster youths' readiness for college were measured as well as their first semester academic performance (Unrau, Font, Rawls, 2011).

[122] Midwest Study participants from Illinois, who were allowed to remain in foster care until age 21, were 1.7 times more likely to have completed at least one year of college by age 23 or 24 than their counterparts from Iowa and Wisconsin, where that option did not exit. However, the Illinois study participants were no more likely to have a college degree (Courtney et al., 2010).

[123] The odds of enrolling in college were 4.6 times higher for Washington State foster youth who participated in a mentoring program than for non-mentored peers with similar characteristics even after controlling for other factors (Burley, 2009).

[124] The odds of graduating from college were 3.7 times higher for foster care alumni in the Northwest Study if they had experienced 6 or fewer school changes than if they had experienced 10 or more (Pecora, et al., 2009).

[125] American Indian/Alaskan Native foster care alumni in the Casey National Alumni Study were about as likely as their non-Hispanic White counterparts to have any postsecondary education, they were significantly less likely to have graduated from college (O'Brien, et al., 2010).

[126] In the Casey National Alumni Study, there were no significant differences in postsecondary educational outcomes between the non-Hispanic White and African American alumni (O'Brien, et al., 2010).

127 African American foster care alumni in the Northwest Study were as likely to have completed any college as their non-Hispanic white counterparts (Pecora, et al., 2009).

128 Although African American Midwest Study participants were significantly more likely to have attended college and to have completed at least one year of college by age 21 than their non-Hispanic white counterparts, only the difference in college attendance was statistically significant (Courtney et al., 2010).

129 A study of former foster youth participating in 8 campus support programs in California and Washington State found that although former foster youth clearly appreciated the concrete services and supports that they received, such as having someone to turn to or someone who believed in them and feeling understood or part of a family, it was the less tangible benefits that they valued most. Moreover, some of the challenges participants reported were not unlike those faced by many young people from low income families when they go away to school but others, particularly their concerns about having a stable place to live, were probably related to their status as former foster youth (Dworsky & Perez, 2010).

130 A study examining the testimony of forty-three high school and college age foster youth in front of panels of policymakers in Michigan identified a lack of supportive relationships with caring adults as the most frequently cited impediment to graduating from high school or applying to/attending college (Day, Riebschleger, Dworksy, Damashek, Fogarty, 2012).

131 Peters et al., 2010.

132 Burley, 2009

133 Dworsky & Perez, 2009.

134 Sommer, Wu, & Mauldon, 2009.

135 Watt, Yanez, & Cossio, 2002.

Caregiver Support

136 A Canadian research team determined that differences in out-of-home placements in Ontario (including the level of academic support provided in the placement) accounted for 15% of the variation among the school performance of foster children. The researchers suggest that promoting effective tutoring practices amongst caregivers could be a promising intervention based on the results of this study (Cheung, Lwin, Jenkins, 2012).

137 Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, Vanschoonlandt, Robberechts, Stroobants, 2012.

138 Flynn, Marquis, Paquet, Pecke, 2011.

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