

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY, TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE  
SERVICES, SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR  
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

TEXAS TRIO PROJECT | STRENGTHENING COURT, CHILD WELFARE AND  
EDUCATION CONNECTIONS FOR YOUTH

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**CWED FINAL REPORT: SEPTEMBER 30, 2011 – JULY 31, 2013**

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October 2013

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

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### ***General Overview of Program:***

The Texas Trio Project was an integrated state and local collaboration that promoted collaborative strategies and cross-systems practices to advance education stability and improved education outcomes for students in foster care. This demonstration grant provided the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), and the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission) the opportunity to work jointly in new ways to address the education of students in foster care. The Children's Bureau, Child Welfare Education Demonstration (CWED) grant gave Texas the opportunity to increase capacity and improve cross-system functioning more broadly.

Through monthly meetings and coordination, state leads from TEA, DFPS, and Children's Commission, made large knowledge gains and grew tremendously in understanding one another's systems and processes related to education. Jointly, the teams reviewed and developed policies and practices to advance the education of students in foster care. Concurrently, a local collaborative project with Houston Independent School District (HISD), and Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Protective Services Region 6 occurred and included both local and state level team members across systems. This was a critical project component that informed state efforts and acted as a learning lab for identifying challenges, training needs, and improving cross-system functioning. Through the HISD pilot both local and state partners gained a greater understanding of the many components to improving foster care and education in both policy and practice. Many of the lessons learned and knowledge gains were included in the [\*Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide\*](#); one of the project's final deliverable to support increased awareness and replicable practices statewide.

Project participants also provided numerous cross-systems and integrated trainings throughout the Texas Trio Project. Both state and local partners presented to a variety of audiences and had the opportunity to promote and disseminate a unified message of collaboration to improve education outcomes. Information related to the Trio project, Fostering Connections, and other related topics were discussed.

The University of Texas, Child and Family Research Institute conducted an extensive evaluation of the project. The project evaluators analyzed both the state and local collaboration; provided recommendations for data sharing; conducted analysis of both state and local level aggregate student data; and conducted a number of survey's and focus groups to identify training needs, challenges, and necessary components to improve foster care and education coordination more broadly.

### ***Summarize process and outcome evaluation findings:***

A magnitude of information was gathered through the project evaluation. This multi-faceted evaluation included several different means of collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data amongst several stakeholder groups. The evaluation report in its entirety can be viewed as a separate document in the final submission packet.

An excerpt from the *UT Final Evaluation Report* addressing outcomes, findings and lessons learned is included. The evaluation centered on three research questions related to the impact of the project on increased collaboration and problem solving; organizational level improvements to increase school stability for foster youth; and increased capacity to improve educational outcomes for foster youth. The findings for each of the research questions are summarized below.

#### **INCREASED COLLABORATION AND CROSS-PROBLEM SOLVING (*EXCERPT FROM UT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT*)**

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One of the most significant successes of the Trio project was bringing together members of DFPS, TEA, HISD and the Children's Commission for the common purpose of addressing issues related to foster care and education. Through the collaboration, issues were acknowledged by the partners and steps were made to affect policy, procedures and communication to improve outcomes for foster youth in school. While it is clear that challenges to collaboration and cross-system functions still exist, the impact of bringing representatives of education and child welfare together to discuss solutions has the potential to affect long-term change.

That said, concerns remained at the state level throughout the project related to inter-agency trust, mutual understanding and clarity of roles and responsibility. Problems with inadequate resources, role clarity and staff turnover were cited as unresolved concerns at the local level. These issues had a significant impact on the function of the Trio Project collaboration and on the deliverables of the proposed project. However, members of the collaboration acknowledged these issues and provided attention to communicating and resolving the problems. The short time frame available to develop relationships, clarify expectations and address the barriers to the collaboration played a role in impeding problem solving. In addition, members cited limitations from being a part of large, bureaucratic institutions with varied rules and perspectives and felt it contributed to slowing down potential change.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL IMPROVEMENTS**

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The evaluation of the Trio Project does indicate steps were made to impact organizational change at the state and local levels. Again, bringing together cross-agency collaboration to problem solve was a significant achievement of the project. One of the most noteworthy contributions to organizational change occurred through the many opportunities for training and education for stakeholders at both the state and local levels. Training for child welfare, education and court professionals regarding supporting foster youth in schools

increased understanding of the issues and the likelihood that change could occur. Furthermore, the creation of the *Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide* will provide an extensive and accessible source of information beyond the time of the Trio project. The *Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide* demonstrates significant cross-agency collaboration and sharing of knowledge between TEA, DFPS and the Children's Commission with valuable information to support foster youth in schools.

One specific organizational-level goal of the Trio project was to affect change in the data sharing procedures between DFPS and TEA. Trio partners expanded their understanding of the data exchange and organizational processes related to foster care and education data. Although a significant change was not realized, several important developments and conversations occurred regarding the policies and procedures of sharing child-level data to track the educational outcomes of foster youth. From these conversations, recommendations for data sharing were created and the plans for improvements continue. In addition, a change in the statewide coding of children and youth in foster care within the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) was realized in the most recent 2013 Texas Legislative Session.

It is clear that more efforts are needed at both the state and local level to address issues in the education of foster youth. However there was evidence in an increase of awareness and recognition of the needs of both foster youth and of schools. The findings also generally indicate an increase in the knowledge of issues and in the actions taken to meet the educational needs of foster children. While these improvements cannot be linked directly to the efforts of Trio collaboration, they do demonstrate a positive shift over the course of the project.

#### INCREASED ITS CAPACITY TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

As described above, raising awareness of education issues for foster youth and training for multiple stakeholders and practitioners are significant gains in the capacity to improve educational outcomes for foster youth. And, again, the importance of bringing together cross-agency collaboration to problem solve cannot be overstated. While the initial hopes for the collaboration were to stimulate more observable change in the ability to better serve foster youth in schools, the schools in the pilot program at the local level did implement some procedures designed to support foster youth. Registrars at two Houston schools were able to test out enrollment procedures specifically designed for foster youth. However, given the short time frame and lack of fidelity to the registration procedures, outcomes were not able to be analyzed. More importantly, the schools utilized the project manager at HISD for support of foster youth. Although that support was beyond the scope of her role, it highlighted a clear need for the district to have a dedicated person responsible for working with foster youth and schools.

On the state level, significant progress was made relating to increasing capacity to assist foster youth. The collaboration that developed between DFPS, TEA and the Children's Commission provides the foundation necessary for further collaboration.

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:

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The CWED grant allowed Texas the opportunity to address challenges and identify necessary improvements regarding foster care and education at both the state and local level. It is hoped that these and other changes will ultimately contribute to improving school stability and the education outcomes of 10-17 year olds involved in the child welfare system in the long run.

### ***Overview of community, population, problem being addressed and collaborative partners:***

The CWED grant and Texas Trio Project provided Texas the opportunity to build on the seminal work of the Children's Commission Education Committee. TEA and DFPS were integral members of the Education Committee along with 100 court, education, and child welfare stakeholders who met over an 18-month period to develop recommendations and strategies for improving foster care and education in Texas. These recommendations and strategies are captured in the final report of the Education Committee, [Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes For Children & Youth in Foster Care](#) and provided a foundation for the collaborative climate in Texas and work of the Texas Trio Project. The Children's Bureau CWED grant provided Texas the opportunity to implement recommendations and strategies identified in the Texas Blueprint, build capacity within TEA, and further solidify collaboration and coordination amongst TEA, DFPS, and the Children's Commission in addressing foster care and education matters.

**Texas Education Agency (TEA)** was the administrative lead and fiscal agent of the grant. Texas has nation's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest school system, serving over 5,000,000 students annually and comprised of more than 1200 independent school districts and charter schools. The grant project was implemented within TEA's Federal and State Education Policy Division. A project coordinator was hired to lead project activities and increase child welfare capacity within the state education agency. TEA's Student Success, Dropout Prevention Director and hired project coordinator represented the agency on the grant.

**Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Protective Services Division** was co-collaborator on the grant. Texas DFPS, through its Child Protective Service (CPS) Division and Child Care Licensing Division, investigates allegation of child abuse and neglect, provides services to children and families, and monitors Texas' foster care system in 11 regions throughout the state. 610,800 children were served by DFPS system in 2012 and annually there is an estimated 16,000 school age-children in foster care system. The DFPS Division Administrator for Permanency and the State Education Program members of the Texas Trio Project and represented DFPS on both the state and local level projects.

**Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission)** was a co-collaborator on the grant. The Children's Commission's Associate Director helped to promote coordination among project participants and represented the Children's Commission on both the state and local level project.

**Houston Independent School District** was a member of the local pilot project. Home to one of the largest child populations in the nation and one of the largest school districts in the state, HISD was selected to be a local site for the project. It was understood at the onset of the project that HISD had nearly 1,000 students in foster care enrolled in their district; however, in the data exchange that occurred in the project Texas Trio learned that the number of students enrolled in HISD at the time of the project was 434 (UT Final Evaluation Report). HISD also hired a project coordinator to lead the local-pilot activities and collaborate with the TEA's project coordinator. HISD implemented pilot enrollment activities in two of the district's schools and had a number of district staff participate in the project.

**DFPS Region 6** was a member of the local pilot project. DFPS Region 6 has the largest number of children in CPS custody in the state, totaling 7,005 in the initial grant application for the project. Region 6 CPS Program Director and Regional Education Specialists were active members of the pilot project. Various other CPS staff contributed to the collaboration through these staff members who represented DFPS Region 6 on the local pilot project.

***Overview of Program Model:***

The Texas Trio Project was an integrated state and local collaboration that promoted development of collaborative strategies and cross-systems practices to advance education stability and improved education outcomes for students in foster care. The project gave Texas the opportunity to build capacity to collaboratively address foster care and education. The project had a number of goals including:

- 1) Improve system functioning through collaboration; develop policies, practice protocols, and resources for the court, education and child welfare systems;**
- 2) Create child welfare capacity in the state education agency; including identification and capacity of school district foster care liaisons;**
- 3) Develop a local cross-system pilot project to serve as a replicable model;**
- 4) Disseminate resources and provide professional development;**
- 5) Use Evaluation to Guide Implementation: Examine Data - develop baseline measures.**
- 6) Sustainability of collaborative efforts (added to project plan after June CWED meeting)**

**Table One. Summary of Methodology**

Overarching goals	Research questions	Activities	Evaluation	Data collection	
Increased collaboration and cross-system problem solving	How has collaboration and cross-system problem solving increased? What barriers were experienced?	State collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Project coordinator</li> </ul>	Field notes from meetings	Throughout
				Content analysis of documents and notes	Throughout
				Online survey of state collaborators	April 2012 & Feb 2013
		Local collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Project coordinator</li> </ul>	Field notes from meetings	Throughout
				Content analysis of documents and notes	Throughout
				Online survey of local collaborators	April, 2012 & Feb 2013
				Online survey of HISD administrators	Jan 2013
				Online survey of DFPS workers	August 2012
Interviews with selected collaborators in Houston	April 2012 & Feb 2013				
Increased capacity to improve school stability	What organizational level improvements have been made to increase school stability for youth in foster care?	State collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Project coordinator</li> <li>• Data sharing</li> </ul>	Field notes from meetings related to data sharing	Throughout
				Content analysis of MOUs, laws, rules related to data sharing	Throughout
				Descriptive baseline analysis of foster children in Texas	October 2012
				Recommendations for data sharing	November 2012
		Local collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Project coordinator</li> <li>• Data sharing</li> </ul>	Field notes from meetings related to data sharing	Throughout
				Content analysis of MOUs, laws, rules related to data sharing	Throughout
				Descriptive baseline analysis of foster children in HISD	March 2013
				Recommendations for data sharing	Nov 2012
Increased capacity to improve educational outcomes	How has the state/local collaboration increased its capacity to improve educational outcomes for foster youth?	State collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainings</li> <li>• Data sharing</li> </ul>	Statewide survey of foster care liaisons	October 2012
				Focus groups with DFPS educational liaisons and disability specialists	June 2012
				Pre-Posttests of any trainings	Throughout
		Local collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data sharing</li> <li>• Enrollment protocols</li> </ul>	Field notes from meetings and observations	Throughout
				Literature review of best practices	March 2012

TEA, DFPS, and the Children’s Commission collaborated on the state level through monthly meetings and weekly communications during the vast majority of the project. Concurrently, HISD, DFPS region 6 and local level partners also met monthly to 1) identify cross-system training opportunities, 2) identify areas for cross-system improvement, and 3) implement enrollment pilot activities in two HISD schools.

This local level pilot project and collaborative team included, DFPS Program Director; DFPS Education Specialist; Health and Human Services Disproportionally & Disparities Specialist; HISD Special Education Parent Support Specialist; HISD Drop Out Prevention staff, counseling and others. The local pilot project provided insights necessary for the state teams understanding. Through monthly meetings and coordination of both the state and local teams’ greater capacity to address the education of students in foster care was developed.

***Overview of the Evaluation: (excerpt from UT Final Evaluation report)***

The chart below provides an overview of the evaluation plan and methodology including research design, data collection procedures and data analysis plan.

**DATA COLLECTION**

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The primary data collection methods included on-line surveys, interviews, focus groups and content analysis of documents related to the Texas Trio Project. The data collection methods were selected to best fit the research questions and desired information, as well as, feasibility due to budget and time constraints. The survey instruments and the interview guides were provided to the Trio Team members prior to their use for feedback and were made available in the appendices of the project evaluation plan.

**SURVEYS.** Five different on-line survey instruments were utilized during the evaluation in order to gather data. First, a pre and post survey was administered to the state level participants in the Texas Trio Project from TEA, DFPS and the Children’s Commission (“state collaborators”; see *UT Final Evaluation Report Appendix A*). The purpose of the survey was to identify progress of the collaboration as well as the successes and barriers the collaboration has faced. The survey contains an adapted version of the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, an empirically tested assessment tool measuring collaboration (Wilder Foundation & Mattessich, 2001). The survey was adapted in order to capture data specific to the state-level Texas Trio Project collaboration. The survey was available on-line through a web-based survey tool. The pre-test survey was administered in April, 2012 and the post-test was administered in February, 2013 in order to assess potential change in the collaboration over the course of the project.

The second survey instrument was administered to the participants in the local level collaboration, including members of Houston DFPS, HISD and the local court system (“local collaborators”; see *UT Final Evaluation Report Appendix B*). The purpose of this survey was also to identify progress, success and barriers of the collaboration. The survey also contained the adapted version of the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory in order

collect information specific to the partnership at the Houston level. The survey for the local Houston area collaborators was available on-line through a web-based survey tool and was administered in April, 2012 and February, 2013.

A third survey was administered online to educators and administrators in HISD who were not directly participating in the collaboration (“local educational professionals”; see *UT Final Final Report Appendix C*).

**Table Two. Data collection summary**

	Definition of group	Information needed	Survey		Interviews		Content of meeting notes, documents
			Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
<b>State collaborators</b>	Anyone participating in the statewide collaboration	Progress, successes & barriers of collaboration	X	X			X
<b>Local collaborators</b>	Anyone participating in the local (Houston) collaboration	Progress, successes & barriers of collaboration	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Local educational professionals</b>	Educators and administrators in HISD who are not participating directly in collaboration	Sense of what is currently happening with foster youth in the district	X				
<b>Local child welfare professionals</b>	Caseworkers, supervisors, CASAs and ad litem in Houston who are not participating directly in collaboration	Sense of what is currently happening with foster youth in the district	X				
<b>DFPS education liaisons and disability specialists</b>	DFPS education liaisons and disability specialists for each DFPS region	Sense of what is currently happening with foster youth			X		
<b>Foster care liaisons</b>	Liaisons appointed by each school district	Sense of who liaisons are, how districts are complying with new laws	X				

The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about what currently happens with foster youth in the school district. This survey helped to provide baseline information about the status quo of foster youth in HISD. It was administered online to participants identified through the Houston collaboration in January, 2013. A fourth survey was administered to those working with youth in the child welfare system, but who were not part of the collaboration (“local child welfare professionals”; see *UT Final Evaluation Report Appendix D*). The local child welfare professionals included CPS caseworkers and

supervisors working with foster youth in the Houston area. Like the local educational professionals survey, this survey provides information about the status quo in Houston. Information regarding future training needs and priority training topics were also included in HISD and CPS surveys. This survey was administered online in August, 2012.

A fifth survey instrument was administered to the school district foster care liaisons throughout the state of Texas. The survey was constructed based on an extensive literature review of educational successes and barriers for foster children (see *UT Final Evaluation Report* Appendix E). The survey collected data from the identified district designated foster care liaisons regarding their roles, knowledge, district support and perceptions of capacity to meet the educational needs of foster children from the school perspective. The survey also captured training needs. The survey was available on-line and was administered to all identified foster care liaisons in October 2012.

In addition to surveys aimed at gathering information regarding the collaborations, a number of pre and post-test surveys were administered to participants in the foster care and education trainings provided by or associated with members of the Texas Trio Project. The surveys assessed gains in knowledge and identified potential gaps. The pre and post training surveys were administered at each training or webinar session. Participants attending trainings in person received a paper copy of the pre and post- test survey or were sent a link to an on-line survey preceding the training. Those that participated via webinar received the pre and post test surveys through the web-based survey tool. The surveys were developed as the specific trainings were generated and scheduled.

**INTERVIEWS.** In-person interviews and focus groups were also utilized in order to increase the understanding of the collaboration and address the research questions regarding the capacity to improve the educational outcomes for foster children (see *UT Final Evaluation Report* Appendix G). First, key identified members of the local Houston collaboration, including members from HISD and Houston DFPS, were interviewed in person to gain further understanding of the success of the collaboration and the experienced barriers. The interviews took place in April of 2012, near the beginning of the implementation of the protocols in HISD and in February of 2013, once the implementation of the changes was underway.

Second, four focus groups were conducted with the statewide DFPS Education Specialists and Disability Specialists in June, 2012 (see *UT Final Evaluation Report*, Appendix F). Each of the eleven DFPS regions in the state of Texas has a dedicated education specialist and the focus group questions assessed their perception of the capacity to improve the educational outcomes of children in foster care from the DFPS perspective.

**CONTENT ANALYSIS.** Meeting notes were reviewed from statewide and local Houston level collaborations for content analysis. Also, agency Memos of Understanding (MOU) and state and federal laws specifically related to inter-agency data sharing practices were evaluated. These documents supported the development of shared processes for those involved in the

collaborations, the implementation of protocols in Houston and the efforts to resolve issues of child-specific data sharing between agencies.

After data collection was completed for each stage, the quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed. The quantitative survey data was exported from the web-based survey tool into SPSS. The data was then reviewed for any problematic trends and missing data. Once the data was prepared in SPSS software, descriptive statistics were utilized in order to illustrate the results.

The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analyzed using conventional content analysis. Conventional content analysis is a qualitative analysis technique used for analyzing text data from transcripts (Cavanagh, 1997). Conventional content analysis is a generally accepted technique and is particularly appropriate when there is limited existing theory or research on a phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the case of examining successful collaboration between child welfare and education, there is limited theory to guide the process. Therefore, in the first step in the analysis, the researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading the transcripts (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Then the data was analyzed by labeling thoughts and statements and then grouping the data into broader categories (Mayring, 2000).

Finally, secondary data analysis techniques were used to examine two distinct sets of data collected from DFPS and TEA in order to create the baseline understanding of the educational status of foster children in Texas. First, aggregate statewide data from cases matched between DFPS and TEA were analyzed and reported. Second, child-level data matched between DFPS and Houston Independent School District were analyzed. Collecting and analyzing the child-specific data about educational outcomes for foster children was an important portion of the evaluation plan. However, since *statewide* matched child-specific data from TEA and DFPS is currently not available, the significant part of this effort was in overcoming data sharing barriers and collecting the baseline information to analyze from the statewide aggregate reports and from the matched cases through an MOU between HISD and DFPS.

Together these qualitative and quantitative data components provide complementary perspectives on the quality of the collaboration and the potential successes and barriers at the state and local level for improving the educational outcomes for foster children.

For a complete review of the report and its findings review the *UT Final Evaluation* attached as a separate document in the final submission packet.

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION/PROCESS EVALUATION

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### ***Intervention/Activity #1: Improve system functioning through collaboration: develop policies, practice protocols, and resources for the court, education and child welfare systems.***

The CWED grant allowed Texas the opportunity to improve cross-system functioning through collaboration, cross-system problem solving, review of policy and development of shared guidance, tools and resources. Addressing challenges and creating system improvements occurred at both the state and local level. Policies and practices on a number of topics were jointly reviewed and developed during the CWED project. Monthly meetings and weekly communication, through a majority of the grant period, allowed lead state agencies to discuss various topics, troubleshoot challenges and develop a shared knowledge on numerous topics.

#### *Development of Foster Care & Student Success resource guide:*

Throughout the project concrete deliverables were produced. One deliverable in particular captures the various facets and multitude of work that occurred as a result of the Texas Trio Project. A comprehensive [Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide](#) was released and disseminated at the conclusion of the project. This guidebook codifies Texas foster care and education laws, policies, practice guidance, and tips that were identified, developed, and or highlighted throughout the collaboration. The guide is a foundational resource and contains critical information for addressing foster care and education in Texas and replicating collaborative cross-system practices throughout the state.

The guide, co-written by Trio partners, centralizes policy and practice guidance to equip the education community and support replication of improved practices. Discussion among Trio partners throughout the guide's development helped the Trio state team create a shared narrative on numerous foster care and education topics. The guide is comprised of 13 chapters and includes 43 practice tips; 20 laws; 27 resource sections; 15 1-page tools and graphic charts to support statewide training, replication and dissemination of foster care and education information. The guide is available online to districts at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf> or for purchase from [TEA's Office of Publication](#). Over 450 hard-copies of the Guide were also distributed to members of the court, agency participants, and community stakeholders. A hard copy of the guide is included in the Trio Project's final submission file.

#### *Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide Content:*

- 1) Foster Care & Education Introduction
- 2) Increasing Cross-System Awareness
- 3) Building Cross-System Partnerships
- 4) Foster Care Overview
- 5) District Foster Care Liaisons
- 6) Identifying Students & Maintaining Confidentiality
- 7) Enrollment 101

- 8) School Stability & Promoting Effective Transfers
- 9) Education Decision Making, FERPA & Information Sharing
- 10) Additional School Provisions
- 11) The School Experience
- 12) Eligible For or Receiving Special Education
- 13) Transitioning Out of Foster Care & Post-Secondary Education Opportunities
- 14) Appendices

#### *DFPS Policy Change:*

The DFPS Residential Contract for FY 2013 requires its caregivers to notify the school of a child's withdrawal due to a placement change and to ensure that all school records are collected at the time the child discharges from the placement. Child Protective Services policy was updated to include the requirement for caseworkers to notify the school of a child's withdrawal if the child requires a placement change from a kinship caregiver. DFPS Trio members worked diligently to have this added to their agency's residential contract requirements for caregivers. Prior, to this change, specific duties for school withdrawal were not defined in Child Protective Services (CPS) policy. Texas hopes that this change in DFPS-CPS policy will help to ensure that students are withdrawn appropriately, resulting in improved transitions when school moves occur and more appropriate services continued in the new school.

#### *Children's Commission Tool Development: (Checklist, Bench Book, Website)*

During the CWED grant period, Children's Commission staff developed resources for judges related to education outcomes of students in foster care. The Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book was updated with related legislative changes and the addition of a topical chapter on education. A website was also created during the grant period to offer resources to judges and other stakeholders. Also, a judicial checklist, which includes questions judges need to ask about education, was developed. The Bench Book and the judicial checklist were provided to courts across Texas responsible for child welfare cases in September 2013.

#### *Lessons Learned/Barriers:*

- Project planning should include discussing agency interests, goals, restraints, decision-making processes, etc. by all participants prior to the project period. If this is not feasible, this activity should be included in the initial stages of the project period.
- Mutual understanding of one another's systems and processes must be understood and shared when working together. Time to develop this knowledge must be built into the project activities and timelines.
- Coordination and working together in new ways presented numerous obstacles and required a great deal of adaptability and flexibility for all involved.
- Cross-systems coordination to develop policy and practice guidance is critical to developing sustainable practices and implementing long-term systemic changes.
- Trio members appreciated the opportunity to understand one-another's systems and worked together to problem-solve and develop shared policy and practice guidance.
- Increasing frequency of communication, including implementation of weekly calls, helped to improve communication, increase awareness of one another's systems, and make forward progress on Trio project deliverables.

- The process of writing a collaborative resource guide provided all systems the opportunity to develop shared understanding and knowledge on complex topics to be replicated. The task was difficult and required Trio participants to work together in new ways to consult on policies, practice tips, and guidance in a way that is traditionally not done across systems.
- Drafting a guidebook that involves multiple systems input took more capacity and time than originally anticipated. Trio members were extremely committed in the guide's development process and persevered in completing the guide despite obstacles, delays and unexpected challenges.
- Relationships and coordination across systems that occurred because of Trio were enhanced during after the legislative session. Coordination and implementation of policies and practices following the legislative session occurred as a result of working relationships established during the Trio project.
- Review of agency communications, new policy developments and other components occur and continue because of relationships and collaboration established through the Texas Trio Project.

**Intervention/Activity #2: Create child welfare capacity in the state education agency; including identification and capacity building to support school district foster care liaisons.**

Developing capacity within TEA to address the education of student in foster care was a significant deliverable that occurred in CWED grant period. The grant provided TEA the opportunity to create a specialized position and hire a staff member dedicated to work and coordinate CWED activities. The coordinator assisted in the development of state and local level action plan, which helped to guide project activities. Hiring a project coordinator helped TEA significantly expand the organizations capacity to address foster care and education more broadly. Increased awareness and communication across numerous TEA divisions occurred as a result of the Texas Trio Project. Organizational infrastructure to address foster care and education was also developed and will continue beyond the grant period. Examples of infrastructure and capacity building are listed below:

- Established the [Foster Care & Student Success](#) webpage on TEA's website with information related to education and foster care.
- Established an email address to field inquiries from district liaisons: fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us.
- Established a 'Foster Care Education' listserv to communicate information about foster care and education to the education community in Texas. At the end of the project period 375 people were members of the listserv.
- Numerous agency communications addressing child welfare were distributed.
- Established a database to track school district liaison assignments.

*Increasing Awareness – School District Foster Care Liaison Capacity:*

Trio collaborators actively promoted and increased awareness about the need for each school district in Texas to have a foster care liaison. The Children's Commission's Foster Care & Education Summit, Texas Education Agency's (TEA) website, To the Administrator Addressed (TAA) letters, legislation passed during the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislative session and other methods helped TEA increase school district awareness and identify liaisons. TEA also developed a database and method to track liaison appointments. Over 435 school

district foster care liaisons were identified during the CWED grant period. Overall, many districts report having little knowledge about students in foster care and sought guidance on recognizing and supporting foster care students within their districts. Trio members jointly developed key duties for school district foster care liaisons which are included in Chapter 5 of the Foster Care and Student Success Student Guide. Additionally, two introductory trainings were developed by Trio members and provided to district liaisons during the CWED grant period. See pages 19-23 for more information about training opportunities and professional development that occurred during the Trio project.

#### *Lessons Learned/Barriers:*

- Developing a common language and clearly defined shared goals at the onset of the project is very important and should have been included in the project's initial logic model and action planning processes.
- Numerous resources, programs and supports exist within the education community. Equipping staff at Texas Education Agency and increasing awareness about students in foster care is necessary at all levels in order for a systemic and cultural shift to occur.
- Building capacity within the education agency takes a large-scale and comprehensive approach. Learning about the responsibilities of numerous divisions, building relationships with staff and coordinating with a multitude of divisions and programs was necessary to fulfill project goals, increase awareness and build sustainable capacity to address foster care and education.
- Including and recognizing students in foster care as a specialized student population in Request for Proposals, grants opportunities, funding announcements, and trainings is an avenue TEA can use to increase awareness and build capacity within the education community to address the education of students in foster care.
- Because of the nature of 'independent school districts' and great diversity in school district size and location in Texas, the specific processes that each district will follow related to the foster care liaisons duties needs to be established locally. The *Foster Care & Student Success Guidebook* is designed to equip the education community and support local implementation. Opportunities for districts to convene regionally will also help to support school districts in developing local processes and troubleshooting challenges.

### **Intervention/Activity #3: Develop a local cross-system pilot project to serve as a replicable model**

#### *Local Pilot description:*

An important component to the Texas Trio Project was the local level pilot project implemented in HISD with Region 6 DFPS. Group members for the pilot, including members of both the state and local team, met monthly at HISD.

The pilot provided Trio team the opportunity to understand the challenges, cross-system training needs, and many opportunities for improved coordination and collaboration to enhance foster care and education locally. Participants gained knowledge about effective collaboration on many levels and insights into the various complexities to this work. The pilot project also provided baseline information regarding student data that was not known prior. The pilot project began the process of developing and identifying reasonable

student identification and information sharing processes and enrollment practices. An enrollment protocol to assess enrollment and streamline practices was implemented in two pilot project schools; yet, various delays and challenges hindered effective implementation.

The original intention was that the Houston pilot project was to guide development of a replicable practice model. Unfortunately, the short time frame of grant and unexpected delays within the pilot project did not allow sufficient time to adequately develop and test the pilot's activities and thus create a replicable model. The pilot did; however, provide many insights and lessons learned that are beneficial as Texas inspires other districts, schools and regions to engage in addressing the education of students in foster care and replicating collaborative cross-system work. Many of the practice tips, strategies and guidance gained in the pilot are included in the *Foster Care & Student Success resource guide*. Additionally, many of the pilot's lessons were included in professional development training provided by Trio partners during the project.

#### *Activity 1) Cross-System Trainings:*

In the HISD pilot numerous cross-system training opportunities were identified by child welfare and education participants. Both child welfare and education have existing trainings and information that can be used cross-system to increase awareness and demystify one another's systems. Project participants and their respective systems benefited from learning more of each other. It is recognized that information sharing and partnership through training and knowledge sharing is a beneficial avenue for partnership building and collaboration. Below is a list of existing trainings that were identified by the pilot that could be shared cross-system and helped to increase awareness and promote professional development with cross-system partners.

#### *Trainings provided in pilot:*

- **Child Protective Services 101** – Conducted for HISD counselors by CPS Program Director
  - **Description:** *CPS 101* provides an overview of how the CPS system works. Participants learn about the different stages of service, types of abuse, and services that CPS offers to families.
- **Introductory Surrogate Parent Training** – Conducted for CPS staff by HISD
  - **Description:** In cases where the child in DFPS conservatorship is receiving special education services and residing in a living in a residential facility, a surrogate parent must be appointed to represent the child for education-related decisions. This training provides an overview of the requirements, training expectations, and district supports provided related to Surrogate Parents.
- **Credit Recovery Training** – Conducted for CPS staff by HISD Virtual School Department
  - **Description:** The purpose of this training is to provide information and increase awareness about the options and types of credit recovery available to high school students who are behind in course credits.
- **McKinney Vento Training** – Conducted for CPS by district & for HISD by state McKinney-Vento/Homeless Liaison staff

- **Description:** The objective of this training is to provide participants with an overview of the McKinney-Vento Homeless student education law, relevant resources and district supports available. The training provides important clarifying information on the different eligibility requirements and how students involved with the CPS system and/or in conservatorship may benefit.
- **Knowing Who You Are** – Conducted by Disproportionality and Disparities Specialist for District
  - **Descriptions:** The *Knowing Who You Are* training offers individuals an opportunity to develop awareness of their racial and ethnic identity and to enhance their psychological well-being and social competence. Staff, volunteers, social workers and other allies who are equipped with skills discussed in this training possess a greater ability to identify and advocate the best outcomes for all children.

*Activity 2) Identifying Students – enrollment protocol:*

HISD and CPS leaders participated in cross-system review of enrollment processes with DFPS state and Houston leaders to assess enrollment, stream-line practices, and develop an enrollment protocol to test in two pilot project schools. The original goal of the activity was to improve school transitions and streamline enrollment processes for students in care; however the project was not long enough to determine the effectiveness of these strategies. A great deal was learned, however, and significant progress made. For example, one of the identified challenges was that school personnel had no way to identify students in foster care. Maintaining confidentiality for students in foster care is critical and finding a balance between identification of students so appropriate services can be provided, while protecting their status as a youth in foster care is challenging. DFPS did identify an existing child welfare form, known as a “Form 2085 - Placement Authorization” to be utilized within the pilot schools as a mechanism for the schools to identify students in foster care. DFPS revised Form 2085 - Placement Authorization to also include the child’s automatic participation in the federal School Nutrition Program, without requiring a separate application as directed by USDA. School pilot project staff were directed to accept this form as verification of the child’s foster care status and to immediately enroll the child in school.

During the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, legislation (§263.004, Texas Family Code) was passed that required an Education Decision-Maker to be designated for all school-age children in the managing conservatorship of DFPS. Through the combined efforts of TEA, Texas Association of School Boards, the family court system, and stakeholders, DFPS created Form 2085E Education Decision-Maker. This form is to be submitted, along with Form 2085E Placement Authorization when a children in foster care enrolls in school.

*Activity 3) Work in Pilot Schools:*

As mentioned prior, an enrollment protocol to streamline, track, and improve enrollment was developed by Trio participants to be implemented in two pilot schools. Although components of the protocol were followed, it was not fully implemented in the way that was planned. Despite these challenges, the coordinator worked diligently to identify and support enrollment with students and utilize the protocol and documentation process to an extent that the project was successful with meeting goals. Additionally, the coordinator

adapted and expanded the pilot activities when opportunities arose. For example, in one school the coordinator worked with the school registrar to add a foster care field to the school's student database to track and monitor the progress of students in foster care. 40 students were identified in the project period, which allowed the school to provide more intentional support to students. Overall the pilot schools needed to be included in all-district planning efforts from the beginning of the project. Additionally, the short-time frame of the grant and late involvement of the schools in district planning efforts made implementation of the pilot school enrollment protocol difficult. Although the pilot activities were not implemented as planned, having a coordinator from the district present on the local school campuses, brought to light many challenges and barriers that impact the timeliness of enrollment and overall student success.

*Activity 4) Student Support Tool – Personal Graduation Program (PGP) identified:*

A student support mechanism used in HISD and throughout Texas schools known as a Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) was identified as a support tool and practice that should be implemented for students in foster care. In short, a PGP is a procedure that the district uses to coordinate and track a selected student's progress in a coordinated and cohesive manner, while also bringing together all of those working in support of the student, including the student, together to develop a coordinated plan for school progress and graduation. Further analysis of local and state data systems revealed that all students coded "at-risk" in the student data tracking tool should receive a PGP. Pursuant to the Texas Education Code, students in foster care are defined as "at-risk," so they should also be receiving PGP's (TEC § 29.081). Further, cross-system coordination in the pilot identified challenges in identifying foster students at the point of enrollment. Consequently, eligible students are not identified as "at-risk" and are not receiving PGPs. The pilot attempted to prioritize implementation of the PGP for students in foster care within 10 days of enrollment within the pilot schools. However, implementation of this practice was not feasible for school staff and not implemented within the project timeline.

*Lessons learned/Barriers:*

- Joint meetings between HISD/DFPS produced significant knowledge gains and identified many areas for cross-system training. Bringing education and CPS together provides many avenues for cross-system learning and knowledge gains.
- High-Level district champion is critical to effectively launch pilot activities, in a timely manner. Coordination with local campus administrators is essential to implement new foster care practices, policies and enrollment protocol activities.
- Involve individual campuses in planning and coordination in district activities.
- Because there are a large number of youths living in Houston not originally from Houston, many students have an 'ISEEYOU' case worker, responsible for placement supervision. This division within CPS should also be included in local collaboration efforts.
- It is important when CPS and TEA assesses the number of youths in a school district, that the agencies consider all youth in foster care who reside in that district, not just students who entered foster care in that district's DFPS region. Students in foster care may reside outside their original legal placement for a variety of reasons. The new placement may be closer to family and kin, a better placement to meet the child's needs, or offer specialized care. We have learned there are many complex factors to consider from each agency.

- Take into account the type placements available in school zones. Establishing pilot activities without considering the nature of the placement can add complications. In the case of the pilot, targeting a school with an emergency shelter has added additional challenges, and opportunities, because these students cannot be placed there more than 30 days and in order for the project to 'test' the activities, students need to be in school longer than 30 days.
- Significant issues surrounding missing education records/document for children and youth in foster care placed in Residential Treatment Facilities and Emergency Shelters were identified, specific attention to these challenges and circumstances are necessary in future collaborations.
- The need for streamlined and uniform school withdrawal process is recognized by the Houston pilot as needed to facilitate successful school withdrawals. The Trio team discovered and addressed inconsistencies within HISD in withdrawal procedures and discovered there was minimal understanding of the process across systems late in the project. Future projects should also include withdrawal.
- Limited time - 17 months is entirely too short of time to implement and test pilot activities. Developing a replicable practice model was not realistic in the time frame. The nature of working across systems and piloting new practices creates numerous challenges and obstacles, thus timelines and project goals should reflect the additional time that is needed.
- Many knowledge gains and practice improvements are identified by having child welfare and educators together to discuss education matters. All replicable practices and tips identified in the project are included in the Foster Care & Student Resource Guide to assist other districts and regions in replicating supports and services for students in foster care.

\*\*A critical component of the pilot project was the data exchange and analysis that occurred as a result of an MOU established by DFPS and HISD. This local exchange of data and the analysis provided by evaluators informed various aspects of Texas' student data and information sharing exchange between child welfare and education in the Houston area. See page 24 for more information regarding data.

#### **Intervention/Activity #4: Disseminate resources and provide professional development**

Disseminating information and providing professional development to increase awareness was an important component and strength of the Texas Trio Project. Trio participants provided presentations for their respective systems, as well as provided joint training addressing foster care and education, the importance of collaboration, Fostering Connections, school stability and other topics. The Trio participants offered 1,669 professionals across sectors 18 trainings during the CWED grant period. Professional development offered the child welfare, education; court and stakeholder communities throughout Texas with important information that will impact foster care and education policy, practice and implementation surrounding school stability for years to come. Project evaluators also surveyed, interviewed, and conducted focus groups to identify the training needs and interests of numerous stakeholder groups. Input from educators, caseworkers, school staff, foster care liaisons, and Education Service Centers will help to inform future training and professional development efforts. See the UT Final Evaluation report including

in the submission file for more information. Additionally, some survey results related to training interests are included in Appendix 7.

*Training & Professional Development:*

A vast range of professionals participated in Trio member trainings including: Child protection courts, judges, CASA advocates, attorney's, CPS staff, child welfare advocates, Education Service Center leaders, school district staff, District Foster Care Liaisons, McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons, Federal and State education policy staff, school superintendents, Higher Education professionals, data coordinators, PEIMS vendors, Communities in Schools staff, Title III and Migrant staff, and others.

Participants by period include:

1<sup>st</sup> period: 125

2<sup>nd</sup> period: 457

3<sup>rd</sup> period: 702

4<sup>th</sup> period: 385

Trio members presented at a number of venues including, but not limited to:

- Child Welfare Judges Conference
- Texas Reach
- Communities in Schools Leadership Institute
- Texans Care for Children, Legislative Priorities – Improving Education Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care
- ESEA Management Institute
- DFPS Education Specialists
- National College Access Network
- Foster Care and Education Summit
- School District Foster Care Liaisons 101 & 201
- McKinney Vento Homeless Liaison Conference
- Austin Community College Foster Care Luncheon
- CASA Education Advocacy Training
- Child Protection Court Ad Litem's Seminar
- Education Service Center Trainings (Regions 13, 20)
- Title III & Migrant Conference
- Texas Education Agency Federal & State Education Policy Division
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century State Conference

*In addition to the many trainings and professional development opportunities that took place during the Trio project, notable training milestones occurred:*

1) Texas' first foster care Education Summit, involving over 200 high-level leaders across the courts, education, and child welfare communities, convened on February 19 and 20 in Austin to address educational challenges faced by students in foster care. This event was a valuable opportunity for the Texas Trio project to disseminate its "lessons learned" and beneficial practices. The event was the first of its kind and a next step in the work of the Children's Commission and the *Texas Blueprint* (published March 2013) Implementation Task Force. The summit represented a new chapter in the initiative: bringing together a

large group of multi-disciplinary stakeholders to raise awareness of the issue and begin establishing connections among the courts, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), and local school districts. Trio member Tiffany Roper directed the summit and led all planning efforts. Other Trio members Julie Wayman (TEA) and Jenny Hinson (CPS) played an instrumental role in the planning team, which convened monthly beginning September 2012 to determine the agenda, topics for discussion, and appropriate framework for the intended audience. Much of Trio's work and lessons learned were highlighted at the summit as a model for leaders across sectors on the importance of coordination, communication, and collaboration to address challenges in foster care and education. Trio participants also worked within their respective agencies to plan for the summit. The Education Summit's planning fostered improved coordination and analysis of policies, data, and information across disciplines. Over the two-day summit, 11 presentations were conducted. The PowerPoint for each presentation was provided on a jump-drive for participants. The recorded presentations and PowerPoints are also available on the Texas Center for the Judiciary website (*see* <https://www.yourhonor.com/single-conference/85#schedule>).

2) Partnership and collaboration through Trio led to development of joint training and guidance for School District Foster Care Liaisons. Discussion and clarification of cross-systems processes for identifying foster students and prioritization of introductory training goals were developed collaboratively. Two introductory webinars were provided by Trio partners:

- *School District Foster Care Liaison 101* – Guidance for Texas School District Foster Care Liaisons took place on 10/24/13. 86 people attended. The archived webinar-training can be viewed online at TEA's *Foster Care Student Success* webpage (*see* <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/178026370>);
- *School District Foster Care Liaison 201* – Understanding Child Protective Services & Court took place on 11/28/13. 90 people attended. The archived webinar can also be viewed online (*see* <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/867275994>).

3) Professional Development - Resource Guide completed:

The *Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide* was developed to promote professional development and disseminate important foster care and education information identified as a result of Trio project. The guide will be used as a professional development tool and training resource for years to come.

*Dissemination:*

In addition to professional development and live trainings Trio participants disseminated information and lessons learned through a variety of channels. Two websites, a listserv, email address, resource guide and other avenues were developed to disseminate information developed during the CWED grant period.

1) Websites: The Children's Commission Education Committee & Texas Education Agency developed websites focused on foster care and education.

- Children’s Commission – Education Website  
<http://education.texaschildrenscommission.gov/>
- Texas Education Agency – Foster Care Student Success webpage  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>

## 2) Listserv:

During the Trio project TEA developed a Foster Care Education listserv to distribute foster care and education related information. Throughout the Trio project, participants promoted the listserv sign-up. Currently 450 people belong to the listserv. This is an important dissemination avenue established during the Trio project that will continue to be used by TEA to update schools and communicate foster care and education information to stakeholders statewide. During the Trio project over 15 messages were distributed on the listserv including information about the Uninterrupted Scholars Act, Child Abuse Reporting, Foster Care Awareness Month, Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide, trainings and other upcoming events.

## 3) Email:

Texas Education Agency established an email: [fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us) to field inquiries from districts, assist with foster care liaison registration and to provide technical assistance and information to the districts related to foster care and education. Since creation of the email over 600 emails and inquiries of various kinds have been received. Staff capacity at TEA to develop this email and field inquiries from districts occurred because of the CWED grant and opportunity to hire a project coordinator at the agency.

## 4) Agency communications:

Trio participants used their organizations mass communication channels to promote and disseminate information throughout the Trio project.

- Texas Education Agency distributed four “To the Administrator Addressed’ (TAA) letters during the grant period. TAA’s are the agencies primary communication channel to Superintendents and district administrators.
  - Foster Care Awareness Month, May 2013:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=25769804968>
  - Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting, March 2013:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=25769803997>
  - Importance of Maintaining the Education Stability for Children and Youth in the Foster Care System, August 2012:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147508587>
  - Attendance, Admission, Enrollment, Records and Tuition, August 2012:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147508100>
- DFPS notified agency staff of updates from the Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide via a Protective Services Information (PSI) memo, which included links on the TEA and Children’s Commission links and updates from the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session.
- Children’s Commission distributed information through a Jurist in Residence letter, updates to the Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book, and on its education and foster care website.

#### 4) Dissemination - Resource Guide:

The resource guide was disseminated across many channels including; TEA's Foster Care Education listserv, Children's Commission Jurist in Residence Letter, DFPS Protective Services Information Memo (PSI); Texas Education Agency Press Release, TEA Facebook page, TEA Twitter, DFPS Facebook page, and other online channels. 450 hard-copies were also printed and continued to be distributed after the grant period.

#### 5) Other:

The University of Texas Child and Family Research Institute used data and information learned and collected during the Texas Trio Project to submit presentation abstracts to Child Welfare League of America and School of Social Work Conference. Additionally a paper was submitted to the Journal of Public Child Welfare. Trio evaluators, Drs. Monica Faulkner, and Beth Gerlach will continue to submit papers and provided abstracts related to information garnered during the Texas Trio project.

#### *Lessons Learned/Barriers:*

- There are many avenues and opportunities to train professionals and thus develop shared knowledge and awareness: Leveraging multiple systems training avenues and information outlets is an important component to distributing shared guidance and a unified message.
- Joint trainings send a powerful message of unity and the importance of collaboration for audience participants.
- There are a limited number of avenues and capacities to disseminate information developed by the Texas Education Agency, thus multiple stakeholders and other groups such as Education Service Centers are essential in carrying forward information distributed by the state education agency.
- Developing shared information and unified message and practice guidance is foundational for equipping stakeholders with a shared knowledge and replicating effective practices statewide.

#### ***Intervention/Activity #5: Use Evaluation to Guide Implementation: Examine Data - Develop baseline measures.***

Through efforts aimed at overcoming the barriers to child-specific data sharing between TEA, HISD and DFPS, a descriptive baseline for foster children's education status was gathered statewide and at the HISD level. The descriptive baseline and following analysis allows for further understanding of the current state of educational achievement for foster children and informs specific targets for future intervention.

#### *Project evaluators provide data-sharing recommendations:*

In November 2012, Texas Trio's program evaluators completed a state-level data sharing recommendation and analysis report. The report highlights current data processes and suggests improvements for the future. The report was reviewed by Trio and provided the team with more opportunities to explore and clarify the intricacies of the existing Memo of Understanding (MOU) and data match process between DFPS and TEA, and the types of improvements necessary to improve the state's data collection efforts. Trio also clarified the definitions and purposes of several data elements, which was critical to improving the

accuracy of foster care and education-related statistics (see the UT Evaluation Report for the data-sharing recommendations provided).

*State & Local Level Baselines:*

Project evaluators not only analyzed DFPS/TEA's current data sharing processes and provided recommendations as noted above, but reviewed and analyzed existing data. Analysis of data and identifying state and local level baselines was another important project component.

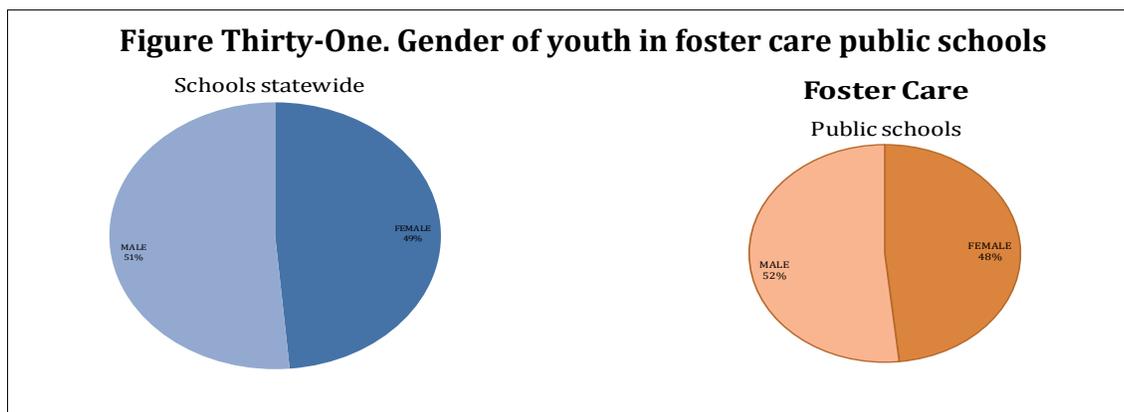
**FOSTER CARE AND EDUCATION BASELINE DATA SUMMARY OF DATA ON FOSTER YOUTH IN TEXAS (AN EXCERPT FROM UT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT)**

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*State-Level Baselines - data review/analysis:*

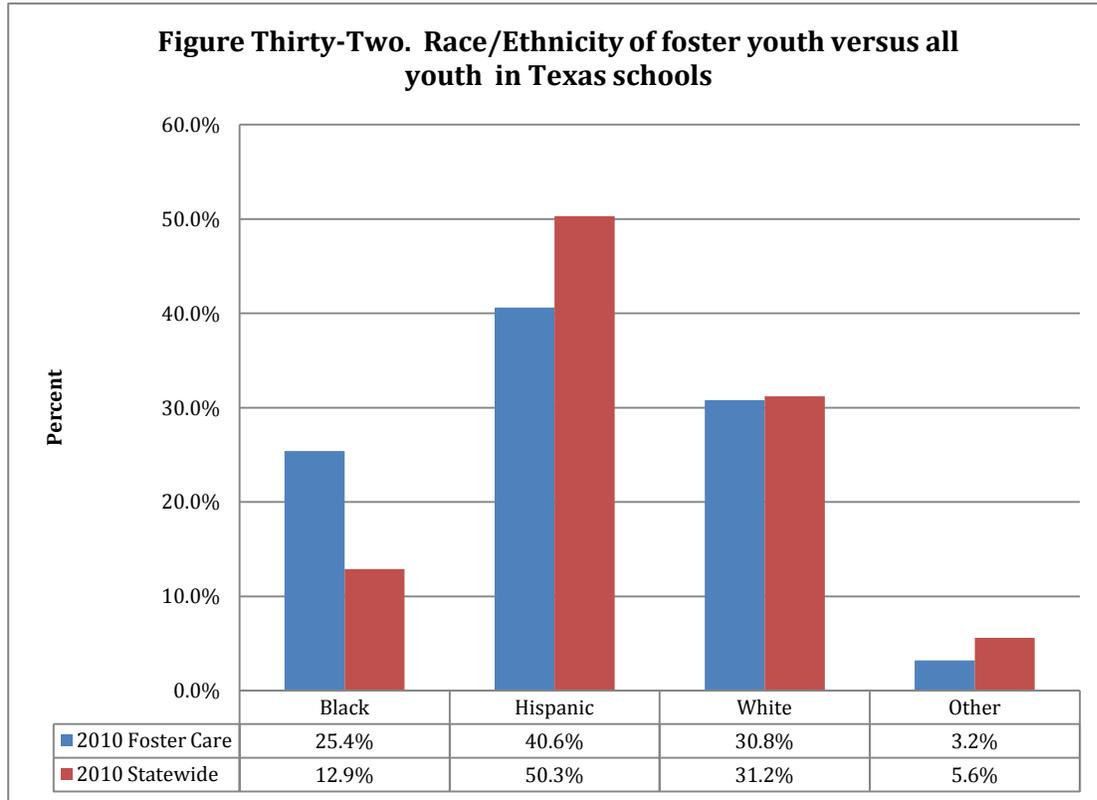
In addition to surveys and other data collection efforts, the evaluation team created a snapshot of foster youth in the Texas public education system. The data used are based on 2010 data provided by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). DFPS provided TEA with demographic information for children and youth in conservatorship in 2010. TEA then matched the data to records within its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). The data was then matched, stripped of identifiers, and provided to DFPS as aggregate data. The process of matching and aggregating data occurs annually and began in 2007. However, the data produced has not been consistent over the years. For this snapshot, the 2010 data was used in all instances except for the number of schools foster youth attend. That data was only produced in 2009.

**DEMOGRAPHICS.** There were approximately 4.9 million children enrolled in Texas public schools in 2010. Approximately 24,000 of these children were foster children. Thus, foster children comprise 0.49% of the children in Texas public schools. In terms of gender, the population of foster youth looks the same as the statewide population of children in public schools. In both cases, there is a slightly higher percentage of girls (Figure Thirty- One).

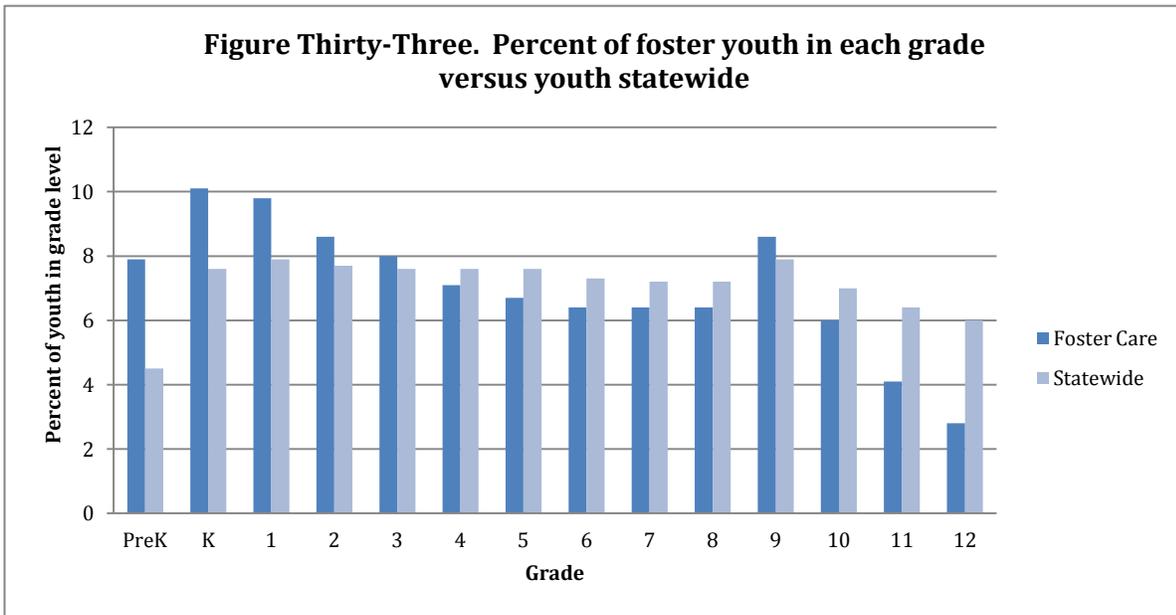


In terms of race, the breakdowns are reflective of broader trends observed in foster care populations. There are disproportionate numbers of Black children in foster care reflected here in school enrollment (Figure Thirty-Two). On the other hand, there are smaller

numbers of Hispanic children in foster care compared to the statewide population of children in schools.

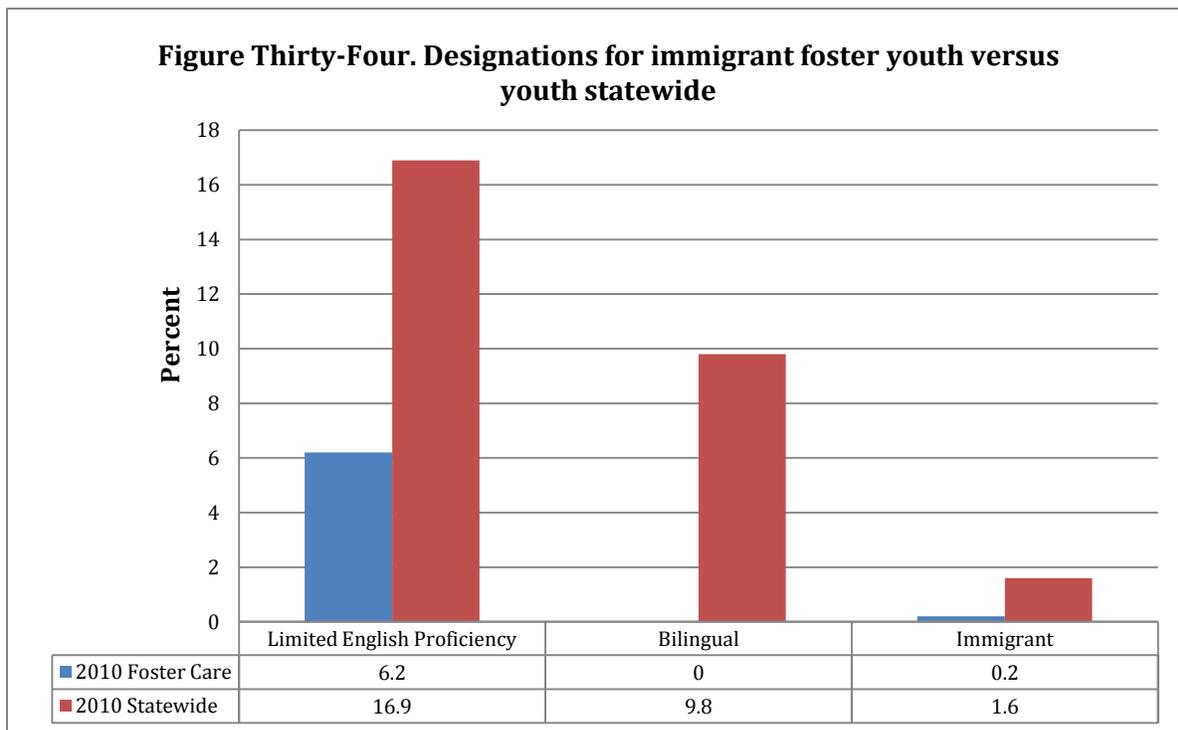


**GRADE LEVELS.** There are differences in grade enrollment in early grade levels and later grade levels (Figure Thirty-Three). Foster children are one of the groups that qualify for free public school pre-kindergarten programs. Thus, there is a higher percentage of foster youth enrolled in preschool programs than the general population. Foster youth are generally not enrolled in private kindergartens, which is reflected in the higher percentage of foster youth enrolled in kindergarten. The differences in grade levels are minimal during middle childhood. However, beginning in grade 10, the numbers of foster youth enrolled in school are lower than the statewide numbers. These lower percentages may suggest greater school instability, higher dropout rates common among older foster youth, or older foster youth refusing to identify themselves as foster youth or in foster care.



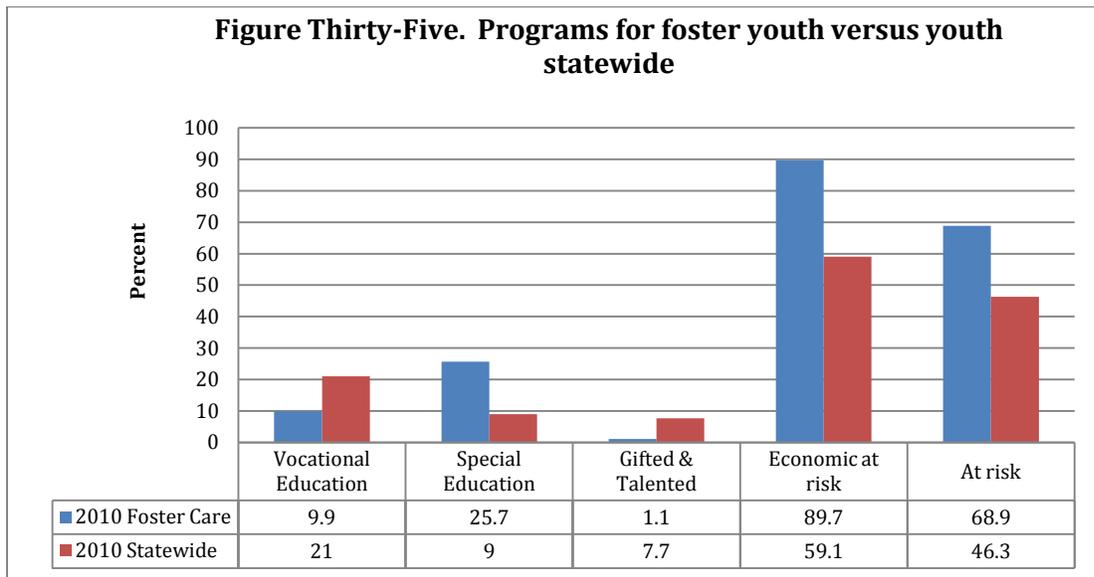
**IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.** There are lower percentages of foster youth identified as immigrants in foster care and statewide (Figure Thirty-Four). In foster care, less than one percent of children enrolled in school are identified as needing bilingual education. Likewise, a lower percentage of foster youth are identified as needing Limited English proficiency (LEP) programs.

**PROGRAM ENROLLMENT.** As would be expected, a higher percentage of foster youth are designated as being economically at-risk compared to all youth statewide (Figure Thirty-

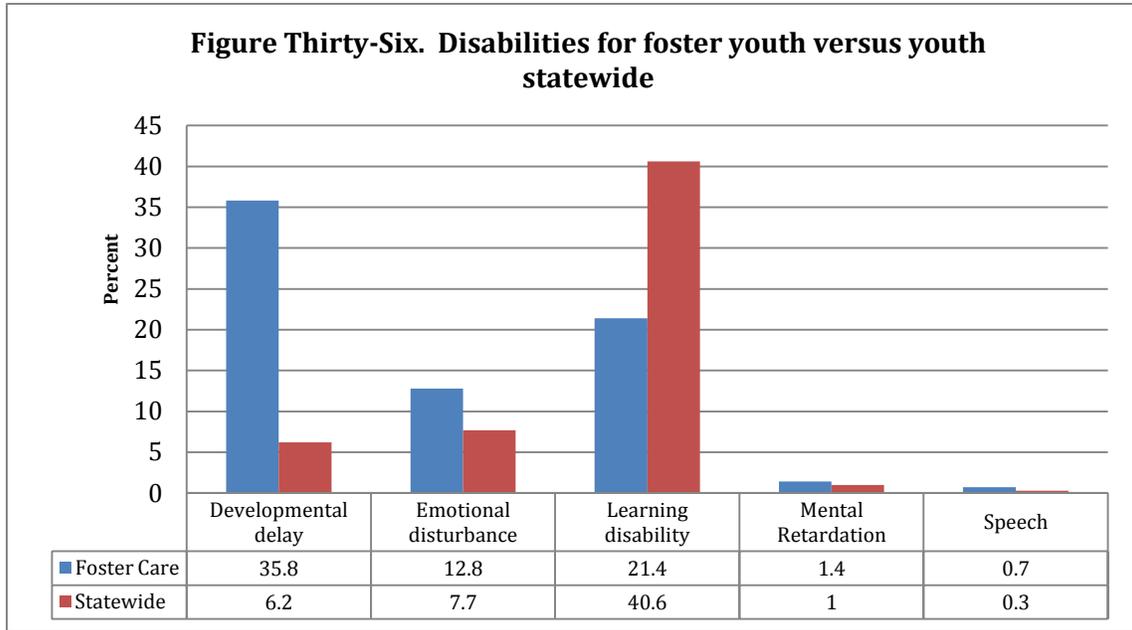


Five). Because poverty is a factor contributing to child abuse/neglect the higher

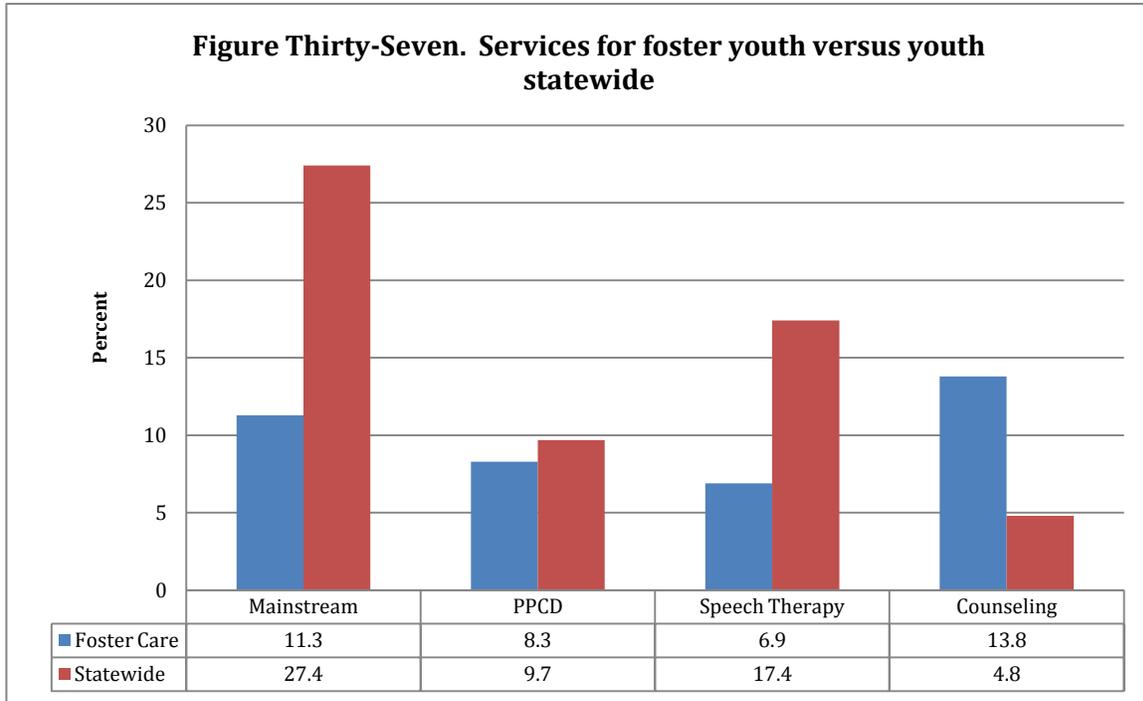
percentage of foster youth designated as economically at risk is also logical. However, while 68.9% of foster youth were designated at-risk, all students in foster care are to be considered at-risk through the Education Code (TEC § 29.081). Therefore, if foster youth were being correctly coded by schools, this number should be 100%. The educational program differences may also raise some concerns. A much higher percentage of youth statewide are enrolled in Gifted and Talented Programs than foster youth. Foster youth have higher percentages of youth enrolled in vocational education and receiving special education services. The higher number of children in foster care and receiving special education services raises concerns on whether foster youth are being inappropriately placed into special education due to behavior issues rather than meeting the criteria for intervention services education.



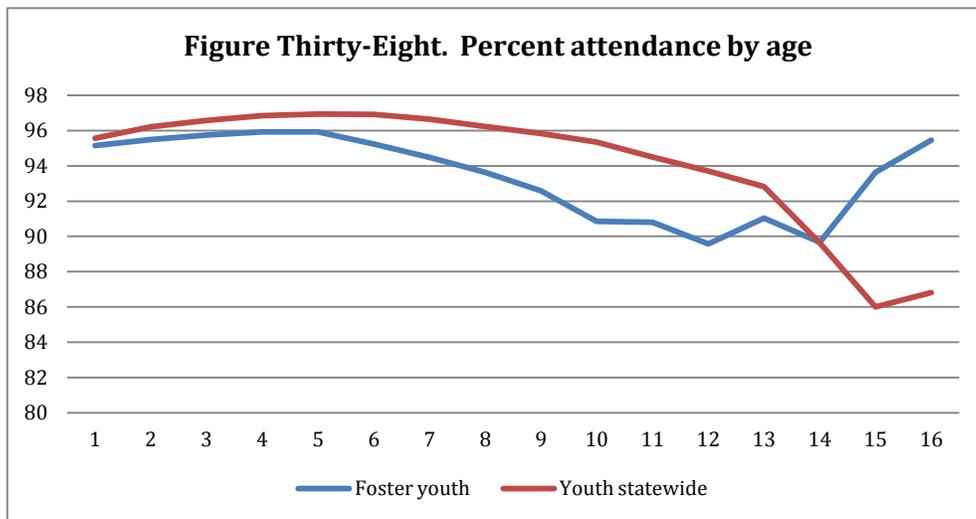
**DISABILITIES.** Foster youth have a much higher percentage of developmental delays compared to all youth (Figure Thirty-Six). Abuse and neglect are often cited as causes for developmental delays along with educational instability once in foster care. A higher percentage of foster youth are designated as having an emotional disturbance compared to their peer group. This discrepancy may be due to the behaviors the children exhibit as a result of the children’s abuse, neglect and trauma. It may also be indicative of a need for more trauma-informed care that can mitigate the behavioral issues that arise from abuse and neglect experiences. In terms of learning disabilities, a much lower percent of foster youth are identified as learning disabled as compared to their peer group.

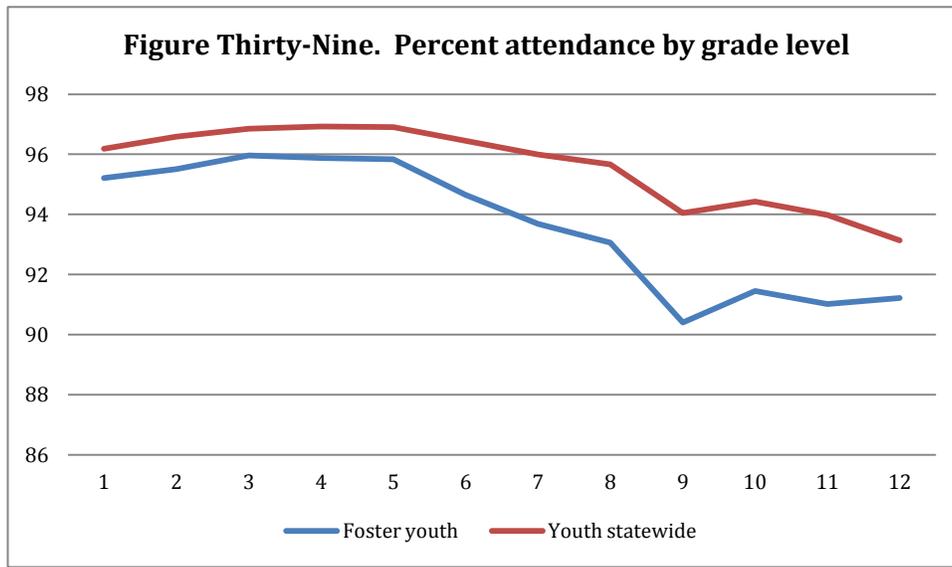


**SERVICES.** A higher percentage of foster youth receive counseling services which suggests schools are assisting in meeting their psychosocial needs (Figure Thirty-Seven). However, lower percentages of foster youth with disabilities are mainstreamed suggesting that more analysis is needed to understand why there is a discrepancy. Additionally, a lower percentage of foster youth receive speech therapy despite the relatively equal percentage of children identified as have speech issues. Finally, there is a lower percent of foster youth participating in Pre-kindergarten Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD). Given the higher percentage of foster children receiving special education services, the PPCD percent may suggest that young children in foster care are not being identified for these programs in comparison to those not in foster care diagnose statewide. Given the higher numbers of foster youth receiving special education services, one might look at if whether foster youth are being correctly evaluated for special education services rather than identified as having a learning disability.

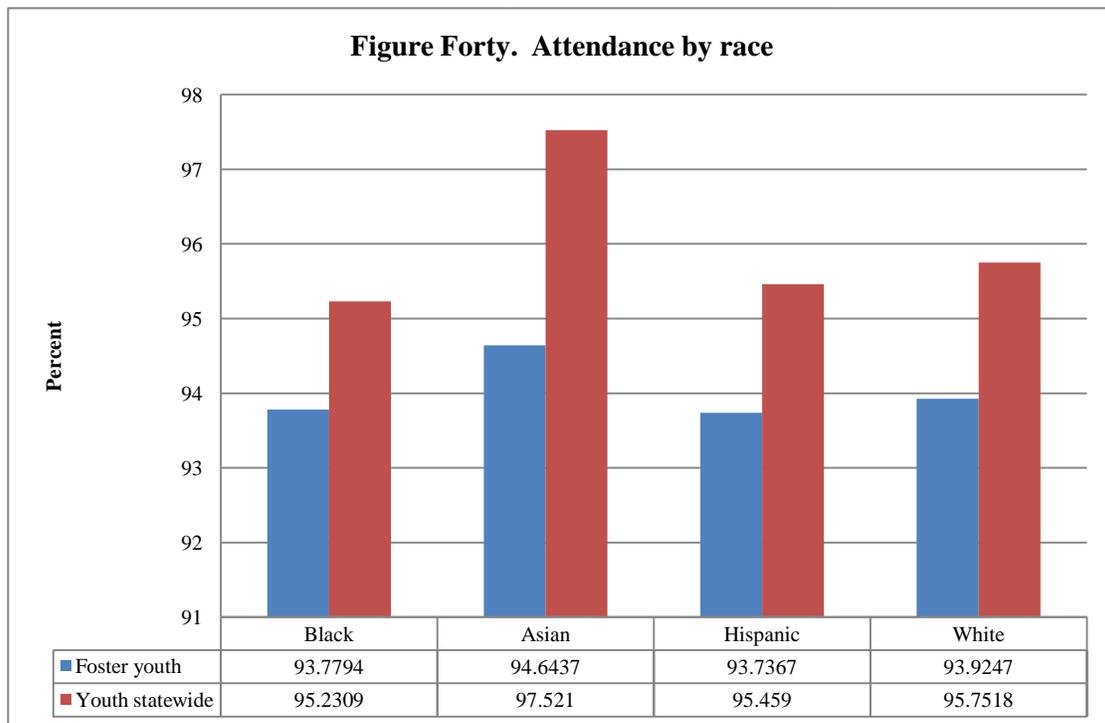


**ATTENDANCE RATES.** Foster youth have lower attendance rates compared to youth statewide. There is a 95.6% attendance rate for youth statewide while foster youth have a 93.8% attendance rate. These rates are broken down by age, grade level and race in Figures Thirty-Eight, Thirty-Nine and Forty below. In terms of race/ethnicity, attendance rates are lower for foster children across race/ethnicity.





**DISCIPLINE ISSUES.** Table Twelve below represents the top 10 disciplinary incidents involving



foster youth. Of these incidents, foster youth were involved in only a small percentage of the discipline incidents statewide. However, considering that foster youth only make up 0.49% of the school population statewide, these incidents may be high for the foster care population. For example, while students in foster care are about 0.5% of the total student population, they make up almost 4% of the out-of-school suspensions. Additionally, it must be noted that these numbers reflect the actual number of incidents, rather than the number of children

committing incidents. Much more data is needed to understand the discipline issues related to foster youth.

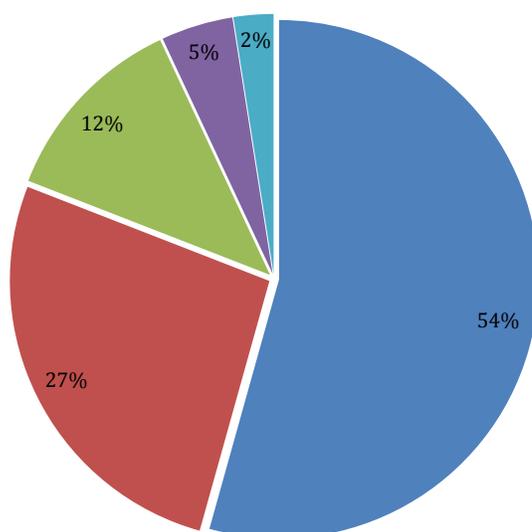
**Table Twelve. Discipline issues of foster youth versus youth statewide**

	Incidents by foster youth	Incidents by youth statewide	Percent of incidents committed by foster youth
Violation of local code of conduct	22,529	1,747,803	1.29%
In-school suspension	25,045	1,434,318	1.75%
Out-of-school suspension	16,909	552,175	3.06%
Part-day in school suspension	5,513	298,171	1.85%
Disciplinary alternative education program	3,486	126,588	2.75%
Part day out of school suspension	3,045	77,702	3.92%
Truancy charges- fine	452	52,409	0.86%
Fighting	887	45,242	1.96%
Truancy- 10 unexcused absences	253	37,392	0.68%
Truancy charges- no fine	458	34,550	1.33%

**SCHOOL CHANGES.** Educational instability is often cited as one of the causes of poor educational outcomes of foster youth. Figure Forty-One below shows that more than half foster youth attend only one school a year. However, 27% attend two schools and a smaller percentage attends more than two schools.

**Figure Forty-One. Percent of foster youth with one or more school changes per year**

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 or more



*FOSTER CARE AND EDUCATION: HISD BASELINE DATA ANALYSIS (EXCERPT FROM UT EVALUATION REPORT)*

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*Local Level Baselines – data review/analysis:*

The local level pilot provided information to enhance Texas’ understanding of the baseline education data of students in foster care on many levels. In June 2012, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Family and Protective Services and HISD was signed to allow the exchange of data and information between HISD and DFPS. The snapshot from this region is particularly meaningful because it has Texas’ largest numbers of students in foster care. In addition to the data, the process of information sharing and the MOU in the pilot provided a much greater understanding of the systemic barriers and obstacles that exist with this exchange. The information collected and the challenges faced help to inform Texas’ understanding of data and information exchange at the local level. Below is an excerpt from the FINAL UT Evaluation Report and includes all of the data and analysis collected codified as a result of the Houston pilot.

**DATA SHARING.** In 2008, TEA and DFPS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share aggregate level data regarding the educational outcomes of foster youth enrolled in Texas schools. Prior to the Texas Trio Project, educational outcomes at a child-specific level were not tracked for foster youth in Texas. However, at the local level, Houston DFPS and HISD entered into a MOU through the Trio Project collaboration in order to share child-level data to create a snapshot for how foster youth are doing in schools. First, Houston DFPS identified a total of 500 foster youth placed within the HISD boundaries. Identifying information including name, age and ethnicity of DFPS foster youth was shared

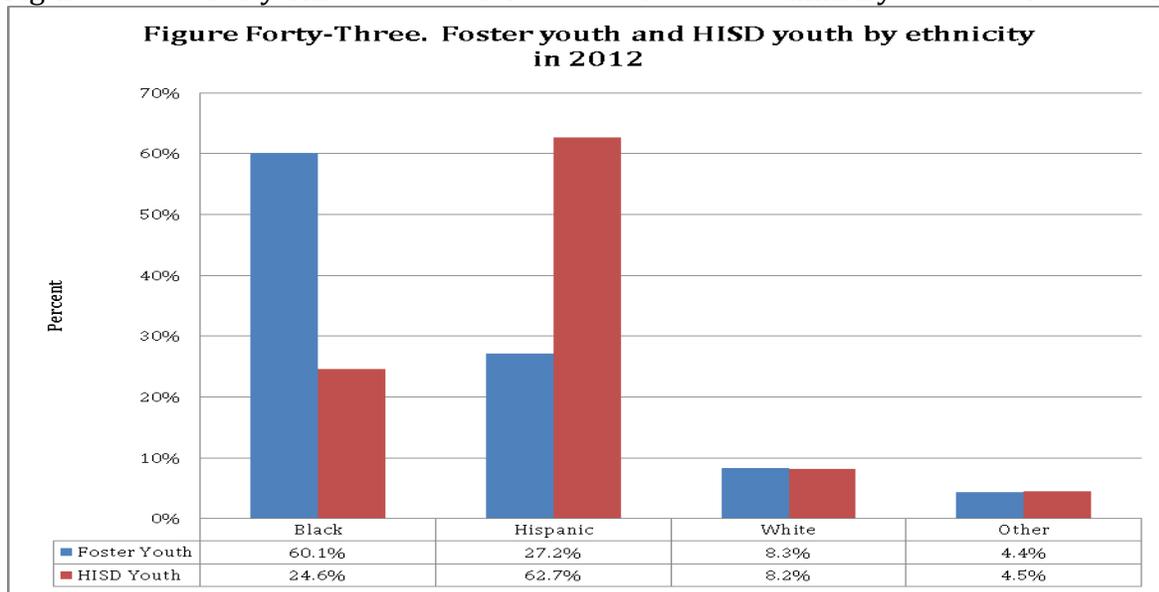
with HISD in October 2012. In December 2012, HISD used the identifying information to match the 500 foster youth to records of students within the HISD school systems. Out of the 500 foster youth, 66 (13.2%) were not able to be matched. Of the remaining 434 foster youth, 182 were not enrolled in HISD at any point during the fall semester (41.9%), while 252 foster youth were enrolled in HISD during the fall semester. By the end of the fall semester, 228 foster youth were still enrolled (90.5%) while 24 foster youth (9.5%) had withdrawn because they moved to another school (87.5%), were removed by CPS (8.3%) or quit attending (3.6%).

When further examining the withdrawal dates of the 182 foster youth who were not enrolled in HISD during fall 2012 but identified by DFPS as being enrolled, it is clear that there is currently a gap in communication between DFPS and the school districts. A total of 112 identified HISD foster youth (61.5%) had withdrawn in 2012 prior to the fall semester, 42 HISD foster youth (23.1%) had withdrawn in 2011, and 28 HISD foster youth (15.4%) had withdrawn prior to 2011. Students were reported to leave the HISD school district for numerous reasons including graduating (1.6%), enrolling in another school (55.5%), being removed by CPS (14.8%), and being withdrawn by the school system because they had quit attending (28.0%). The reasons for the inconsistency between school data and HISD data are unknown; however, the data suggest further need for collaboration between schools and social services to best track and serve the foster youth, particularly in cases where students are withdrawn by the schools because a student has quit attending.

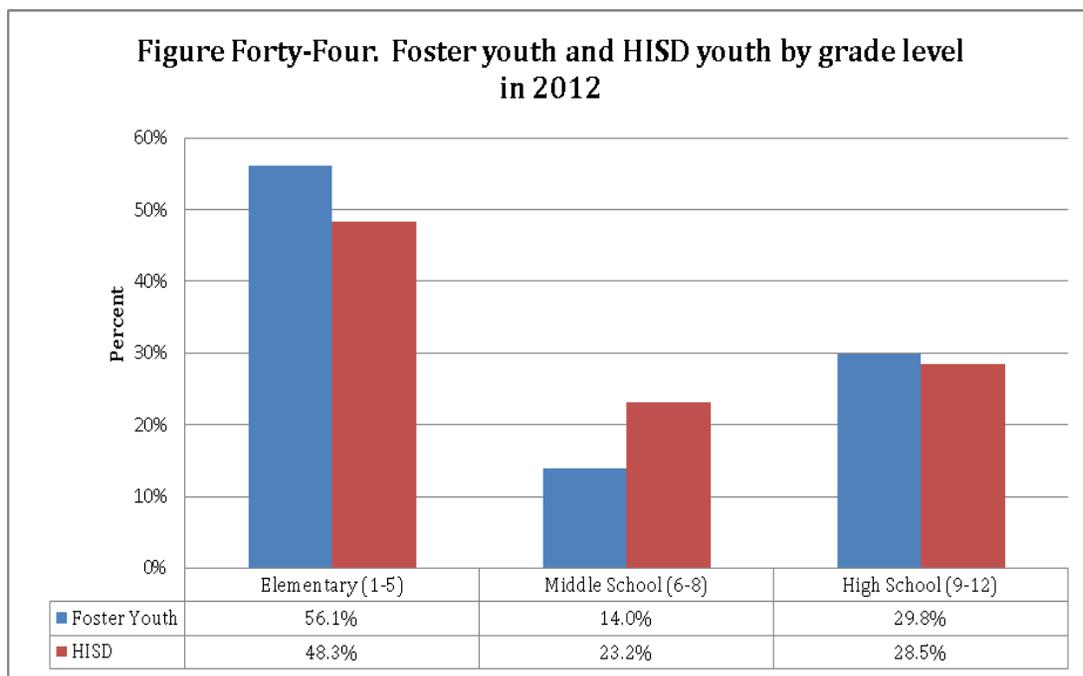
**DEMOGRAPHICS.** There were approximately 203,000 children enrolled in HISD schools in 2012. Thus, the 228 enrolled foster youth comprised 0.11% of the children in HISD. The mean age of the 228 foster youth was 11.29 ( $SD=3.32$ ). In terms of gender, the population of foster youth looks the same as the statewide population of children in public schools, with girls representing a slightly larger proportion of the population. See Figure Forty-Two to the right.

In terms of race and ethnicity, the breakdowns within HISD of foster and HISD youth are reflective of state and broader trends observed in foster care populations. The proportion of Black students among the HISD foster youth (62%) was significantly higher than the proportion of Black youth within HISD (25%). Additionally, the proportion of Hispanic foster youth (27%) was significantly lower than the proportion of Hispanic HISD youth (63%). See

Figure Forty-Three for a summary of results.



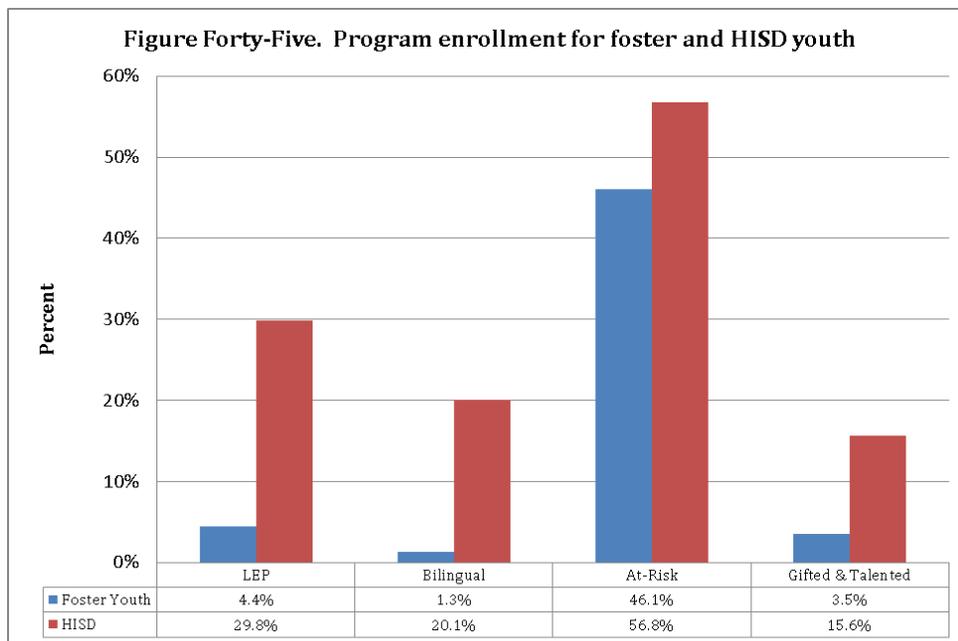
**GRADE LEVELS.** In 2012, there were differences in grade enrollment in early grade levels and middle school grade levels. There was a higher percentage of elementary school foster youth (56%) and a lower percentage of middle school foster youth (14%) compared to the proportion of HISD elementary students (48%) and HISD middle school students (30%). However, it should be noted that the overall trends between grade level groups is reflective of the number of grades included within each grade grouping so the higher percentages of students within elementary school do not necessarily reflect drop out rates. See Figure Forty-Four on the following page.



**LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP).** Consistent with the state data, there are low numbers of foster youth identified as needing LEP services within HISD. Only 4% of foster youth required LEP services and only 1% needed bilingual services. The proportion of youth needing services within HISD was significantly higher with 30% of the HISD students needing LEP services and 20% needing bilingual services. Statewide data also suggests that there are low percentages of foster youth identified as immigrants which may also contribute to differences of LEP rates between the two groups.

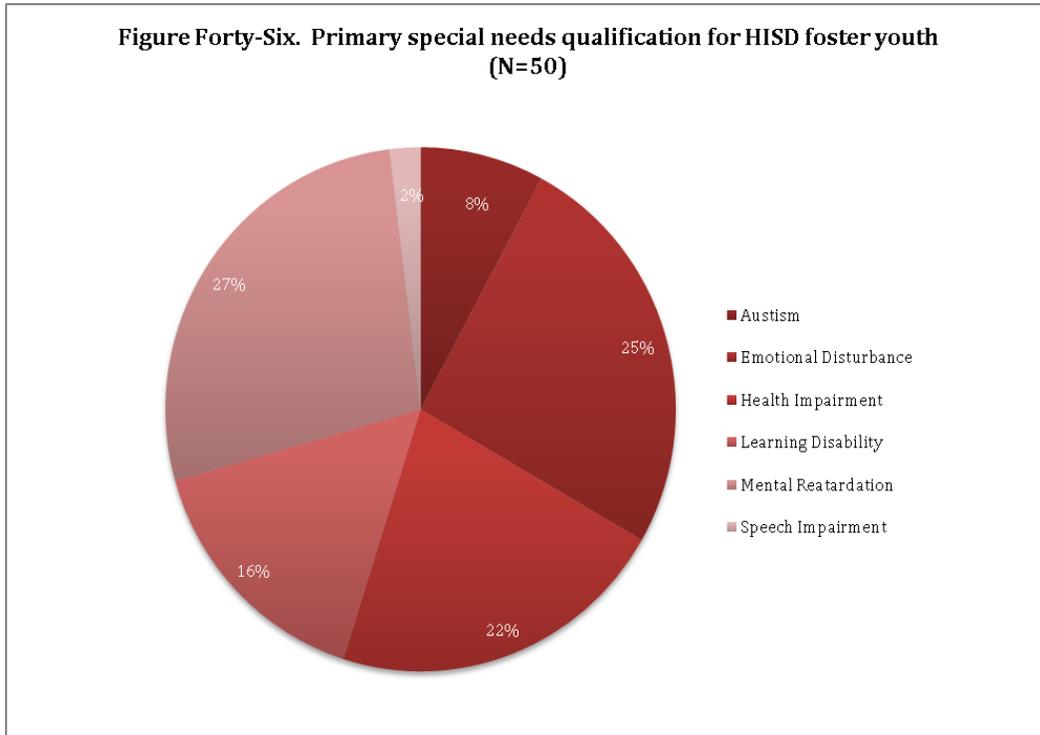
**AT-RISK QUALIFICATION.** As discussed in an earlier section, all foster youth are considered at-risk through the Texas Education Code by virtue of being placed in foster care. Therefore, these results indicate that over 50% of foster youth in HISD are either not being identified or not being coded correctly (TEC Section 29.081.).

**GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM.** A much higher percentage of youth statewide are enrolled in Gifted and Talented Programs than foster youth. Consistent with this finding, the percentage of HISD youth enrolled in Gifted and Talented Programs (15.6%) was significantly higher than the foster youth enrolled in Gifted and Talented Programs (3.5%). See Figure Forty-Five below for summary of all programs mentioned above.



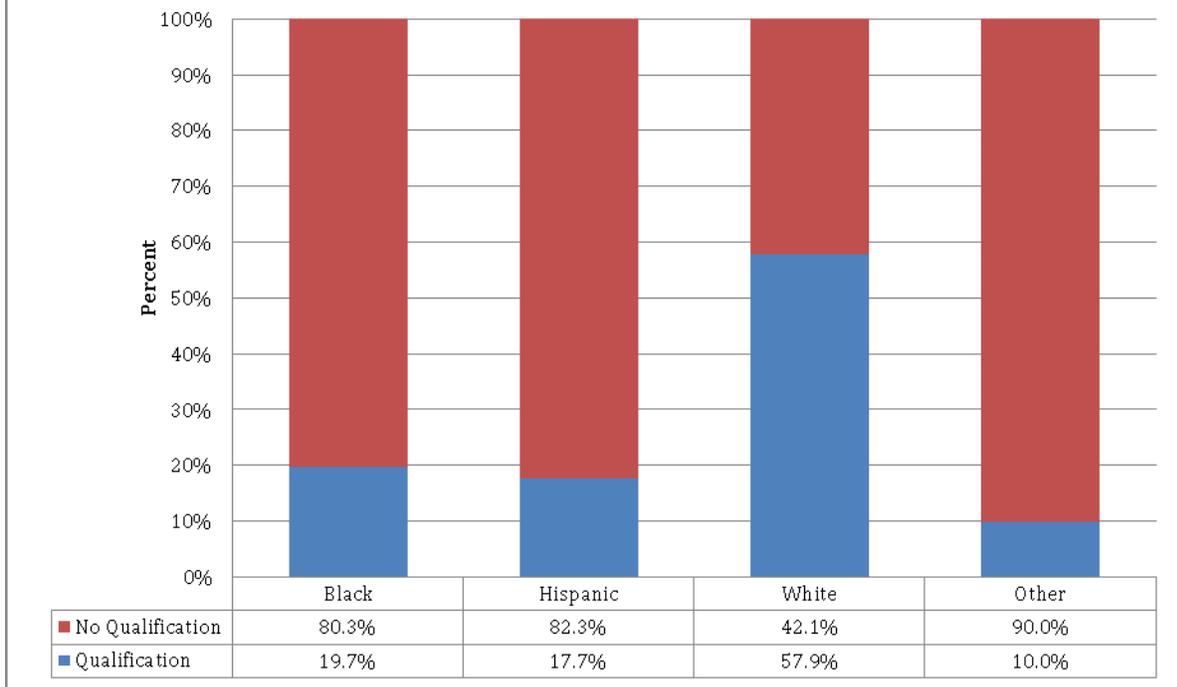
**SPECIAL EDUCATION.** One of the more common outcomes used to assess educational status of students in foster care is the eligibility for special education services. Qualifying special education conditions include orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injuries, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, speech impairments and other health impairments. A total of 50 foster youth qualified for special education services (23%). This proportion was significantly higher than the proportion of HISD youth qualifying for special education services (8%). The majority of special education qualifications for foster youth were based on the following three conditions: mental

retardation/intellectual disability (27%), emotional disturbance (27%) and learning disabilities (19%). Of the 50 foster youth that qualified, about half of them had a second qualifying condition. See Figure Forty-Six below.



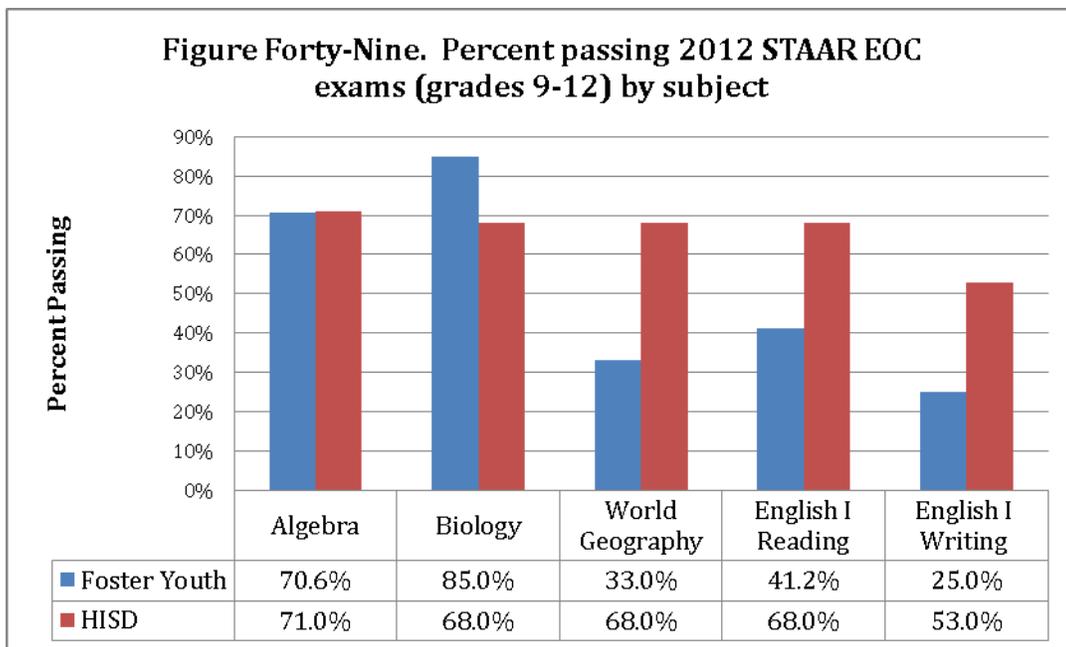
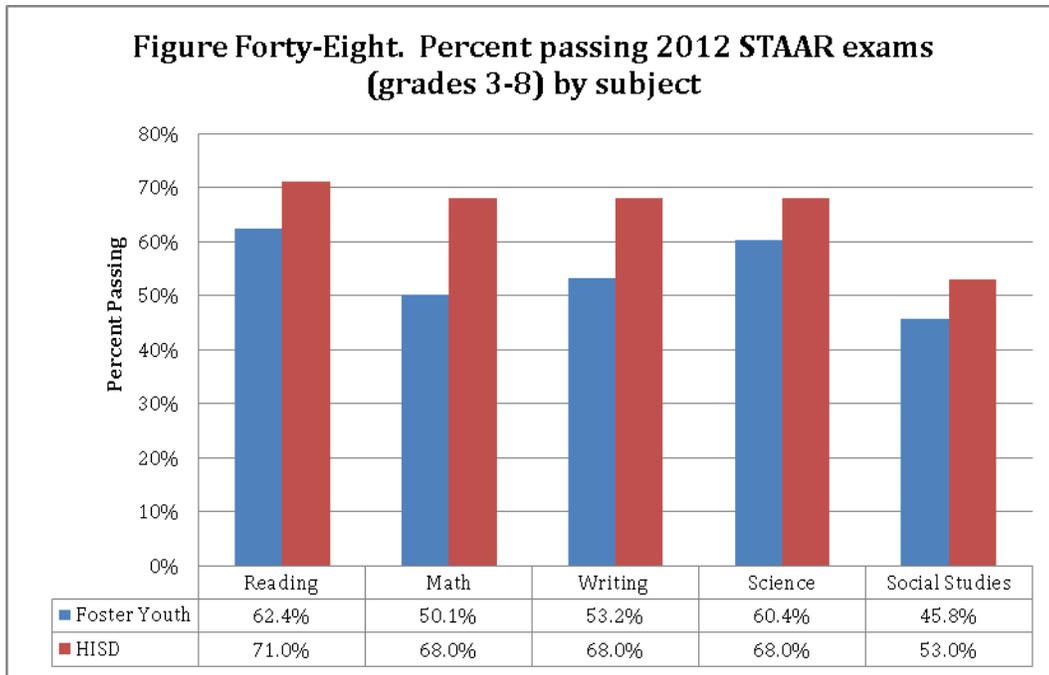
**QUALIFICATION BY ETHNICITY.** When broken down further, special education qualification varied by ethnicity. A greater proportion of White foster youth qualified for special education services (58%) compared to Black foster youth (20%) and Hispanic foster youth (18%) who qualified for services. The ethnic disparities are concerning particularly when considering the majority of the foster youth are Black (60%) and Hispanic (27%). This ethnic disparity among foster care youth qualifying for special needs education raises questions about how foster youth are being placed into special education and whether the needs of minority foster youth are being recognized. See Figure Forty-Seven below.

**Figure Forty-Seven. Special needs qualification by ethnicity for HISD foster youth in 2012**

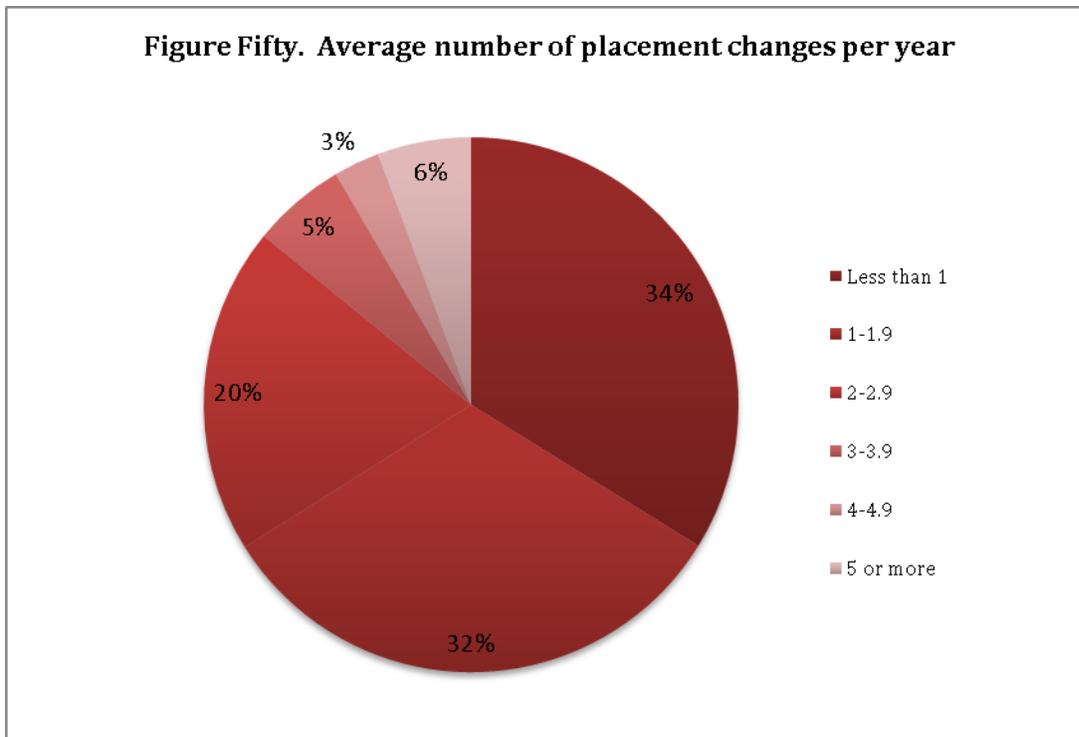


**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.** The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is a standardized test that was first used in 2012 to assess academic readiness for grades 3-8 in math, writing, reading, social studies and science. Additionally, 12 end-of-course (EOC) assessments were created to examine academic readiness in grades 9-12. In grades 3-8, foster youth performed lower on STAAR examinations compared to HISD youth across all subjects. Only 50% of the foster youth scored satisfactory or above, 60% passed science, 46% passed social studies, 62% passed reading and 53% passed the writing exams. See Figure Forty-Eight.

In grades 9-12, foster youth did worse on the EOC algebra, writing, reading and geography tests; however, the foster youth performed similarly to HISD youth on the biology exam. Approximately 72% passed algebra, 85% passed biology, 41% passed English 1- reading, 25% passed English 1- writing and 33% passed geography. For a comparison to district data, see Figure Forty-Nine on the following page.



**PLACEMENT CHANGES.** As mentioned previously, educational instability is often cited as one of the causes of poor educational outcomes for foster youth. Due to placement instability, foster youth are often moved from school to school. In this population, the mean number of days in care for HISD foster youth was 939, ranging from 34 days to 5188 days. The mean number of placements was 3.1, ranging from 1 to 18 placements. The mean number of placement changes per year in care was 1.9 placements, ranging from 0 to 10.8 placements, suggesting that on average foster youth are changing placements almost twice a year. See Figure Fifty below.



*Lessons Learned/Barriers: (applicable to inform other district, school and CPS collaborative projects that exchange data)*

- Consider the data base system between child welfare and education. There were some challenges in implementing the MOU and actual exchange of information. Incompatible computer systems between *agencies* created additional workload and time frame issues in establishing the MOU between DFPS and HISD.
- Although local level data systems may be robust, data may still be hard to collect. HISD has a very robust data system, yet many indicators were hard to collect and not accessible with the data exchange. The information was housed in various places within the student information system and thus accessing the various records was not feasible. These functional aspects of HISD's system made the exchange and collection of information very cumbersome for people working within HISD on the data.
- Delays with data exchange impacted review of the data by project participants. Unfortunately, review and analysis of the data took place with the UT and the project coordinator late in the project period and local members from Houston's pilot were not able to review and analyze the data.
- Include staff from organizations data units when determining data, collection, etc. HISD's data unit should have been included in planning and analysis regarding data. Their involvement initially, would have provided a much more realistic understanding of what data could be collected and the timeframe.
- Include evaluation within the initial design of the project. As it was originally conceived, youth outcomes would have been measured despite the lack of available data and time needed to demonstrate change.

## **Intervention/Activity #6: Sustainability of collaborative efforts (added to project plan after June CWED meeting)**

### *Collaboration Sustainability:*

Members from TEA, DFPS and the Children's Commission agreed to participate in on-going quarterly meetings to sustain collaborative efforts. The meetings will provide a forum to gain input from stakeholders and collaboratively address foster care and education related matters. Additionally, TEA created a permanent position in the agency to sustain and continue the foster care education work that began due to the Texas Trio Project. Lastly, the evaluation team will continue to submit papers related to information learned in the Texas Trio Project and has also agreed to continue to analyze the *Introductory Liaison Surveys* that were developed for the Trio Project to collect information from new district foster care liaisons.

### *Texas Blueprint Implementation Task Force Workgroups:*

The Children's Commission *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Task Force, chaired by the Honorable Rob Hofmann, Child Protection Court of the Hill Country, began meeting in January 2013 and prioritized the recommendations and strategies identified in the *Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes For Children & Youth in Foster Care*. To assist with implementation of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations, the task force created three cross-disciplinary collaborative workgroups: 1) Training and Resources, chaired by Judge Cathy Morris, Child Protection Court of South Texas; 2) Data and Information Sharing, chaired by Julie Wayman of the Texas Education Agency; and 3) School Stability, chaired by Joy Baskin of the Texas Association of School Boards and Jenny Hinson of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. These groups will meet over the next fourteen months to address matters related to their respective workgroups and further cross-system collaborative efforts related to foster care and education.

### *Lessons Learned/Barriers:*

- Ongoing coordination and communication is necessary to sustain collaborative efforts.
- Ongoing communication is necessary amongst a multitude of stakeholders to effectively implement policy and practice guidance addressing foster care and education.
- All parties benefit from being informed and engaged in decision-making regarding foster care and education matters.

## CONCLUSIONS:

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The Texas Trio Project provided TEA, DFPS, and the Children’s Commission to make significant knowledge gains and strides in collaboration to improve foster care and education in Texas. The projects various facets and diversity of activity provided a rich learning on multiple levels for all involved. The project also provided a state-platform to significantly increase awareness about foster and education and promote the importance of cross-system collaboration. There were also many unexpected ‘wins’ and activity that occurred as a result of the collaboration that were outside of the scope of the grant. The project serves as a foundation and launching for on-going collaborative work. The collective knowledge garnered through development of cross-system working relationships, collaborative trainings, resource guide development; evaluation and assessment of Texas’ foster care work; increased organizational capacity at the Texas Education Agency; and ongoing Children’s Commission Workgroups provide the foundation and infrastructure to carry forward foster care education improvements in Texas.

**IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: (HIGHLIGHTS BELOW INCLUDE LESSONS LEARNED PREVIOUSLY STATED IN REPORT. ALSO, SEE CHAPTER 3 OF THE *FOSTER CARE & STUDENT SUCCESS RESOURCE GUIDE* (INCLUDED IN THE FINAL SUBMISSION PACKET) FOR MORE INFORMATION TO GUIDE FUTURE COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS)**

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*Present Recommendations to Administrators of future similar projects:*

- Developing a common language and clearly defined shared goals at the onset of the project is very important and should be included in the project’s initial logic model and action planning processes.
- Mutual understanding of one another’s systems and processes must be understood and shared when working together. Time to develop this knowledge must be built into the project activities and timelines.
- Project planning should include discussing agency interests, goals, restraints, decision-making processes, etc. by all participants prior to the project period. If this is not feasible, this activity should be included in the initial stages of the project period.
- Increasing frequency of communication, including implementation of weekly calls, helped to improve communication, increase awareness of one another’s systems, and make forward progress on Trio project deliverables.
- Coordination on project activities across large state systems takes considerable time. Project administrators should consider the time investment required by collaboration in determining project goals and timelines.
- Grant managers can help future projects set realistic, goals and timelines, which may include assisting projects in scaling back activities proposed in the original grant proposal.
- Relationships and coordination across systems that were developed because of the project greatly assisted during the legislative session. Coordination and implementation of policies and practices following the legislative session also occurred as a result of working relationships established during the collaborative project.

- There are many avenues and opportunities to train professionals and thus develop shared knowledge and awareness; leveraging multiple systems training avenues and information outlets is an important component to distributing shared guidance and a unified message.
- Joint trainings send a powerful message of unity and the importance of collaboration for audience participants.
- Developing shared information and unified message and practice guidance is foundational for equipping stakeholders with a shared knowledge and replicating effective practices statewide.
- Consider the administrative layout of your child welfare, judicial, and education systems. The make-up of these systems and how they are administered (local, state-run, etc.) impact collaborative efforts, control and ability to implement policy and practice changes.

*Present Recommendations to project funders:*

- Funders should extend the length of the project period, so that more measurable results can be determined.
- 17 months is an infeasible period of time to implement, test and measure project activities. In the Trio project, developing a replicable practice model was not realistic in the time frame. The nature of working across systems and piloting new practices creates numerous unexpected challenges and obstacles, thus timelines and project goals should reflect the additional time that is needed.

*Present recommendations to the general field:*

- Cross-systems coordination to develop policy and practice guidance is critical to developing sustainable practices and implementing long-term systemic changes
- Many knowledge gains and practice improvements are identified by having child welfare and educators together to discuss education matters. Many replicable practices and tips identified in the project are included in the Foster Care & Student Resource Guide to assist other districts and regions in replicating supports and services for students in foster care
- Coordination and working together in new ways presented numerous obstacles and required a great deal of adaptability and flexibility for all involved.
- Including and recognizing students in foster care as a specialized student population in Request for Proposals, grants opportunities, funding announcements, and trainings is an avenue TEA can use to increase awareness and build capacity within the education community to address the education of students in foster care.

*School district and child welfare collaborative projects:*

- High-Level district champion is critical to effectively launch pilot activities, in a timely manner, and coordination with local campus administrators is essential to implement new foster care practices/policies and enrollment protocol activities.
- Involve individual campuses in planning and coordination in district activities.
- Take into account the type placements available in school zones. Establishing pilot activities without considering the nature of the placement can add complications. In the case of the pilot, targeting a school with an emergency shelter has added additional challenges, and opportunities, because these students cannot be placed there more than 30 days.
- Joint meetings between child welfare and education produced significant knowledge gains and identified many areas for cross-system training. Bringing education and CPS together provided many avenues for cross-system learning and knowledge gains.
- Consider both enrollment and withdrawal practices and processes with students.

- Include local group homes, and residential treatment centers in planning efforts.

#### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (EXCERPT FROM UT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT)

Perhaps the most important outcome of the Trio Project is that it further highlighted the needs of Texas in relation to the education of foster youth. As previously stated, work had already been done highlighting the needs and making recommendations related to the education of foster youth. The Trio Project attempted to move into the implementation stage for some of those recommendations but ultimately discovered more barriers.

The primary recommendation for future projects is to have a more realistic scope and time frame. Trio team members are very passionate about their work and want to impact systemic change for foster youth. However, initial ideas about what the project could accomplish in 17 months were overly ambitious given the financial and staff resources. Because the scope was too broad, team members struggled to understand tasks, roles, deliverables and realistic outcomes. Many meetings were centered on trying to develop a shared understanding of issues and knowledge of multiple systems rather than tasks. As a result, members were at times frustrated with the process of implementing the tasks associated with the goals of the project.

A second recommendation is to include evaluation within the initial design of the project. As it was originally conceived, youth outcomes would have been measured despite the lack of available data and time needed to demonstrate change. Additionally, there was a lack of clarity regarding goals, objectives and how to measure progress towards those objectives. Including evaluators on the front end of the project design would have helped to narrow the scope of the project.

An additional recommendation for future projects is to understand agency constraints. When working on systemic change between multiple agencies, it is important to take time within a group to understand the barriers that staffs at different agencies face in making change internally. For instance, both TEA and DFPS have different internal decision-making structures, attorneys, commissioners, statutes and political pressures. DFPS expects and encourages participation from internal and external stakeholders in developing policies and programs. While the project had support from agency leadership, that support could not negate the internal agency protocols that team members faced. Once team members began to communicate about their agency processes, constraints and resources, the project appeared to function more smoothly.

*\*Excerpts included throughout report from University of Texas Child and Family Research Institute, Texas Trio Project Final Evaluation Report, October 2013 submitted by Dr. Monica Faulkner, Dr. Beth Gerlach, and Laura Marra, LMSW.*

Appendix #1

Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide

[www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf)

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>



# FOSTER CARE & STUDENT SUCCESS:



Texas Systems Working Together  
to Transform Education Outcomes  
of Students in Foster Care

PRODUCED BY



Appendix # 2

Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families Children's Commission

*Texas Blueprint webpage*

<http://education.texaschildrenscommission.gov/>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Texas Blueprint website. At the top, there is a banner with a photo of children in a classroom. The banner text reads: "THE TEXAS BLUEPRINT: Transforming Education Outcomes For Children & Youth in Foster Care". To the right of the banner is the logo for the Children's Commission, which includes the text "Children's Commission" and "SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES". Below the banner is a navigation bar with links: Home, Education Committee, Links, Resources, Why do we care?, Education Summit, and Texas Children's Commission. There is also a search bar with the text "Google Custom Search" and a "Search" button. The main content area features the title "Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Texas Foster Care" in orange. Below the title is a paragraph of text: "In 2010, the Supreme Court of Texas issued an Order Establishing the Education Committee of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission). The Education Committee — a high level group of court, education, and child welfare decision-makers — created a collaborative initiative and produced a roadmap for us to follow, the *Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care*." Another paragraph follows: "The Education Committee believed that school, court and Child Protective Services (CPS) stakeholders needed a website dedicated to the educational needs of students in foster care. This website is intended to be used by teachers, school administrators, CASAs, attorneys and guardians ad litem, school attorneys, courts, and any others who might support children and youth in foster care." At the bottom, there are three colored boxes: a green box for "SCHOOLS" with a graduation cap icon and a "Learn more..." link; a teal box for "CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES" with an icon of three people and a "Learn more..." link; and a brown box for "COURTS" with a scales of justice icon and a "Learn more..." link.

## Appendix #3

Texas Education Agency – *Foster Care Student Success* webpage

[http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147512292&menu\\_id=2147483761](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147512292&menu_id=2147483761)

The screenshot shows the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website's navigation and content for Foster Care & Student Success. The left sidebar contains a menu with categories like Administrators, Teachers, Funding, Testing/Accountability, Curriculum, Reports, News & Events, and ARRA/Ed Jobs. The main content area features a navigation bar with Agency Info, District Information, A-Z Index, and Help. The page title is 'Foster Care & Student Success'. Below the title, there is a search bar and an 'Advanced Search' link. The main text describes the resources provided for students in foster care and lists several key areas: School District Liaisons, Laws and Guidance, State Efforts, Collaboration, Child Protective Services, and Information and Resources. A prominent announcement states that a 'Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide' is now available, accompanied by a thumbnail image of the guide's cover. The guide is described as a comprehensive resource developed in partnership with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the Supreme Court of Texas. Below the announcement, the 'Guide Formats' section lists options for downloading an interactive PDF, ordering a full-color hardcopy, requesting a digital PDF file, and downloading individual chapters.

**TEA**  
TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

**Administrators**  
school resources

**Teachers**  
teacher resources

**Funding**  
school finance & grants

**Testing / Accountability**  
student assessment & ratings

**Curriculum**  
standards, college prep & programs

**Reports**  
data, statistics & research

**News & Events**  
communications & calendars

**ARRA/Ed Jobs**  
stimulus, stabilization, & ed jobs

**Alternative Schooling**

**About TEA**

**Assistance - TEAL/ECOS**

**Commissioner**

**Complaints**

**Copyrights/Royalties**

**Dropout Information**

**Early Childhood Education**

**Education Laws & Rules**

**Educator Certification**

**Educator Login/Account**

Agency Info | District Information | A - Z Index | Help

Search [Advanced Search](#)

## Foster Care & Student Success

**Foster Care & Student Success**, housed in Texas Education Agency's Division of Federal and State Education Policy maintains resources and information for school district liaisons, educators, students, and others interested in supporting the educational success of students in foster care. The resources and materials provided are intended to provide guidance related to the unique circumstances surrounding students who live in foster care and attend Texas public schools. In Texas, over 16,000 school-age students live in foster care.

The Foster Care & Student Success web content is divided into the following areas:

- [School District Liaisons](#)
- [Laws and Guidance](#)
- [State Efforts](#)
- [Collaboration](#)
- [Child Protective Services](#)
- [Information and Resources](#)

### Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide Now Available!

TEA has released a [Texas Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide \(PDF, 7.67 MB\)](#). The agency has worked over the last year with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the Supreme Court of Texas, Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission) to develop a comprehensive resource for Texas schools. The guide contains a variety of key topics and calls attention to important matters related to the education of students in foster care.

TEA desires that the guide is widely used and distributed! Please share with your districts, schools and networks. The guide is available in a variety of formats.

**FOSTER CARE & STUDENT SUCCESS:**  
Texas System Working Together to Transform Educational Outcomes of Students in Foster Care

**Guide Formats**

- Interactive PDF available for download. [www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf)
- A full-color hardcopy may be ordered from TEA's Office of Publications. [www.tea.state.tx.us/publications/info/](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/publications/info/)
- A digital PDF file to produce high-quality copies for distribution. Email: [fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us) to request the guide file.
- Individual chapter downloads.

Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide - Content Sections

## Appendix #4

Texas Education Agency, To the Administrator Addressed Letter, August 22, 2012:  
Screen Shot from TEA webpage  
(See attached copy for letter in its entirety)

The screenshot shows the TEA website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Agency Info', 'District Information', 'A - Z Index', and 'Help'. Below this is a search bar with a 'Search' button and a link to 'Advanced Search'. The main content area features a large red heading: 'Importance of Maintaining Educational Stability for Children and Youth in the Foster Care System'. To the right of this heading is a 'Word Version' link. Below the heading, the date is listed as 'Wednesday, August 22, 2012', followed by the text 'TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:'. The subject line reads: 'Subject: Importance of Maintaining Educational Stability for Children and Youth in the Foster Care System [1]'. The main body of text discusses the challenges faced by children in foster care, such as frequent moves and educational instability. It references research from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), as well as national research from the Casey Family Programs. A list of bullet points follows, highlighting that children in foster care often lack basic foundation skills and that only 51% graduate from high school compared to 79% of the general population. On the left side of the page, there is a sidebar menu with various categories: Administrators (school resources), Teachers (teacher resources), Funding (school finance & grants), Testing / Accountability (student assessment & ratings), Curriculum (standards, college prep & programs), Reports (data, statistics & research), News & Events (communications & calendars), and ARRA/Ed Jobs (stimulus, stabilization, & ed jobs). At the bottom of the sidebar, there are links for Alternative Schooling, About TEA, Commissioner, Complaints, and Copyrights/Royalties.

**TEA**  
TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

**Administrators**  
school resources

**Teachers**  
teacher resources

**Funding**  
school finance & grants

**Testing / Accountability**  
student assessment & ratings

**Curriculum**  
standards, college prep & programs

**Reports**  
data, statistics & research

**News & Events**  
communications & calendars

**ARRA/Ed Jobs**  
stimulus, stabilization, & ed jobs

[Alternative Schooling](#)

[About TEA](#)

[Commissioner](#)

[Complaints](#)

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**Agency Info** | **District Information** | **A - Z Index** | **Help**

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## Importance of Maintaining Educational Stability for Children and Youth in the Foster Care System

[Word Version](#)

**Date: Wednesday, August 22, 2012**

**TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:**

**Subject: Importance of Maintaining Educational Stability for Children and Youth in the Foster Care System [1]**

There are approximately 16,000 children under the umbrella of foster care attending Texas public schools. Children in foster care face a number of challenges that impact their ability to be successful in the school environment. Children in foster care move from home to home and school to school more frequently than other children for a number of reasons; usually those reasons involve the need to ensure the child resides in the safest and most appropriate home environment that meets the child's needs. Some children and youth may reside in multiple placements and may ultimately attend many different schools over the course of their time in foster care. Consequently, children in foster care frequently lose course credit, repeat courses they have already taken, are placed in inappropriate classes or grade levels, and cannot participate in extracurricular activities. Delays in transferring school records result in serious disruptions in learning and special education services.

Research shows poor education outcomes for youth in foster care. From aggregate data provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) concluded that many students in foster care struggle to achieve minimum educational outcomes and establish educational stability. The following DFPS conclusions mirror the national research on education outcomes for children and youth in foster care conducted by the Casey Family Programs. ([www.casev.org](http://www.casev.org)):

- Children and youth in foster care are likely to lack basic foundation skills in core subjects.
- 51% of the students in foster care graduate from high school compared to 79% of students in the general population. (PEIMS 2010-2011)

## Appendix #5

Texas Education Agency, To the Administrator Addressed Letter, March 6, 2013:

Screen Shot from TEA webpage

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=25769803997>



**Administrators**  
school resources

**Teachers**  
teacher resources

**Funding**  
school finance & grants

**Testing / Accountability**  
student assessment & ratings

**Curriculum**  
standards, college prep & programs

**Reports**  
data, statistics & research

**News & Events**  
communications & calendars

**ARRA/Ed Jobs**  
stimulus, stabilization, & ed jobs

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**Alternative Schooling**

- ▣ **About TEA**
- Commissioner**
- Complaints**
- Copyrights/Royalties**
- Dropout Information**
- Early Childhood Education**
- Education Laws & Rules**
- Educator Certification**
- Educator Login/Account Set Up**
- Educator Preparation**

**Agency Info** | **District Information** | **A - Z Index** | **Help**

**Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting and Requirements**

[Word Version](#)

**March 6, 2013**

**TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:**

**Re:** Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting and Requirements

The purpose of this letter is to remind school districts and open-enrollment charter schools of important statutory requirements for schools related to child abuse and neglect, to encourage administrators to adopt policies and practices that promote awareness of child abuse and neglect reporting, and to disseminate free resources that are available to help protect Texas children. The Texas Family Code (TFC) Chapter 261, Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.004 and §38.0041, and Texas Administration Code (TAC) §61.1051 govern mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting, policy development, required child abuse anti-victimization programs, and related professional development provisions for schools.

The public education system plays an important role in reporting suspected abuse and neglect of Texas' children. School personnel represent the largest professional resource for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect in Texas. Of the 199,474 completed investigations of suspected child abuse and neglect conducted by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in 2012, 35,100, or 17.6%, were reported by school personnel.<sup>[1]</sup> At the same time, many instances of child abuse and neglect may go unreported. Increasing awareness about child abuse and neglect, including mandatory reporting laws, is important to protect children attending Texas public schools. Education leaders can promote awareness of Texas laws, and the important role of school personnel to report suspected abuse and neglect, by developing effective reporting policies, programs and staff development.

One important way to promote awareness is to post information on child abuse reporting in schools. School districts are encouraged to post the Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline Number, and how to report online, in public school buildings for easy viewing by faculty, students and visitors. Following is an example of information that should be visibly posted in high traffic areas in each public school building:

**What must I do if I suspect abuse or neglect of a child?**

**If a child is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local police first.**

**Then call the Texas Abuse Hotline to make a report.**

**The Texas Abuse Hotline is open 24/7/365**

**1.800.252.5400**

[www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)

**(Report via the online reporting system for non-urgent situations only. A non-urgent situation means that information is not needed within 24 hours.)**

Search [Advanced Search](#)

Appendix #6

Texas Education Agency, To the Administrator Addressed Letter, Foster Care Awareness Month, May 17, 2013:

Screen Shot from TEA webpage

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=25769804968

The screenshot shows the TEA website interface. On the left is a navigation menu with categories like Administrators, Teachers, Funding, Testing / Accountability, Curriculum, Reports, News & Events, and ARRA/Ed Jobs. Below these is a list of links including Alternative Schooling, About TEA, Assistance - TEAL/ECOS, Commissioner, Complaints, Copyrights/Royalties, Dropout Information, Early Childhood Education, Education Laws & Rules, and Educator Certification. The main content area has a red header with 'Agency Info', 'District Information', 'A - Z Index', and 'Help'. The page title is 'TAA Foster Care Awareness' with a search bar and 'Advanced Search' link. Below the title is a 'Word Version' link and the date 'May 17, 2013'. The main text is titled 'TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:' and discusses National Foster Care Month, the Texas Education Code (TEC) 33.904, and provides a list of bullet points for stakeholders. It also includes a section for district contributions and contact information for fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us.

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TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

**Administrators**  
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**Teachers**  
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**Funding**  
school finance & grants

**Testing / Accountability**  
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**Curriculum**  
standards, college prep & programs

**Reports**  
data, statistics & research

**News & Events**  
communications & calendars

**ARRA/Ed Jobs**  
stimulus, stabilization, & ed jobs

**Alternative Schooling**

⊕ **About TEA**

**Assistance - TEAL/ECOS**

**Commissioner**

**Complaints**

**Copyrights/Royalties**

**Dropout Information**

**Early Childhood Education**

**Education Laws & Rules**

**Educator Certification**

**Agency Info** | **District Information** | **A - Z Index** | **Help**

**TAA Foster Care Awareness**   [Advanced Search](#)

[Word Version](#)

May 17, 2013

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

In recognition of [National Foster Care Month](#), please join with TEA to increase awareness and contribute to improving the educational outcomes of Texas' 16,000 students in foster care. The Texas Legislature has identified school success as a positive counterbalance to the many challenges and obstacles foster youth face, and has required each school district to appoint a school district foster care liaison pursuant to the Texas Education Code (TEC) 33.904. If you have not yet notified TEA of the name of your foster care liaison, please submit the name of your district's appointment to [fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us).

To assist schools with implementing their statutory responsibilities regarding students in foster care, TEA has compiled a list of foster care and education resources for your use.

- Visit TEA's [Foster Care & Student Success](#) webpage for TEC statutes, policy guidance and training materials. This webpage is updated frequently.
- Sign-up for TEA's [Foster Care Education](#) listserv to be added to the stakeholder distribution list.
- Learn about the importance of education: "[Education is the Lifeline for Children and Youth in Foster Care](#)" – Research Highlights on Children and Youth in Foster Care, October 2011.
- Distribute "[What Teachers & Educators Can Do to Help Students in Foster Care](#)" throughout your district – from National Foster Care Month.

Your district can contribute to the educational success of students in foster care by:

- Facilitating a smooth transition for students in foster care who must move to a new school by working collaboratively with other schools and districts to ensure that records are transferred in a timely fashion and students are re-enrolled immediately, awarded credits earned, and placed in appropriate classes and grade levels.
- Using trauma-informed practices in the classroom. See the free [Child Trauma Toolkit](#) in both English and Spanish from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
- Promoting postsecondary messages and opportunities. Connect students with resources.
- Strengthening collaboration with child welfare, courts, child advocacy organizations, foster parents, and others involved with children and youth in foster care.

Email your questions, comments, or concerns to [fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:fostercareliaison@tea.state.tx.us). Thank you for your commitment to

Appendix 7:

UT Final Evaluation Report Training Topics Interest Survey Results (See final UT Evaluation Report for more information)

**Table Seven. Level of interest in training topics (Houston Pilot members)**

Training topic	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
Impact of trauma on behavioral issues			X	
Impact of trauma on learning			X	
Foster care investigations		X		
Foster care placements			X	
Rights of foster children			X	
Educational issues of foster children			X	
Laws related to education of foster children				X
Confidentiality issues of foster children			X	
Creating safe school environments for foster children		X		

**Table Nine. Level of interest in training topics (School District Liaisons)**

Training topic	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
Impact of trauma on behavioral issues			X	
Impact of trauma on learning			X	
Foster care investigations			X	
Foster care placements			X	
Rights of foster children			X	
Educational issues of foster children			X	
Laws related to education of foster children			X	
Confidentiality issues of foster children			X	
Creating safe school environments for foster children			X	

Appendix 7 - Continued

**Table Ten. Level of interest in training topics (HISD Educators)**

Training topic	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
Impact of trauma on behavioral issues			X	
Impact of trauma on learning			X	
Foster care investigations			X	
Foster care placements			X	
Rights of foster children			X	
Educational issues of foster children				X
Laws related to education of foster children			X	
Confidentiality issues of foster children				X
Creating safe school environments for foster children				X

**Table Eleven. Level of interest in training topics (Houston DFPS Caseworkers)**

Training topic	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
Impact of trauma on behavioral issues			X	
Impact of trauma on learning			X	
Foster care investigations		X		
Foster care placements		X		
Rights of foster children			X	
Educational issues of foster children			X	
Laws related to education of foster children				X
Confidentiality issues of foster children				X
Creating safe school environments for foster children			X	

