



To: Texas Judges Who Hear CPS Cases

From: The Honorable Robin Sage and The Honorable Dean Rucker,
Jurists in Residence, Supreme Court Children's Commission

Date: November 30, 2015

RE: New Data Available on Education Outcomes for Texas Foster Youth

Since 2010, the Children's Commission has engaged in an initiative to improve how students in Texas' foster care system fare educationally. You may recall that in 2012, the Children's Commission Education Committee released the [Texas Blueprint](#), a roadmap with more than 125 recommendations to address this issue. The attached [infographic](#) highlights educational outcomes for children in foster care for the 2012-2013 school year (the most recent year of complete data) and underscores the importance of using and fostering data driven decision-making at the state and local level. Please use this infographic to encourage conversations in your community to help continue to improve education outcomes for students in foster care.

Q: What does the current data tell us about educational outcomes?

A: During the 2012-2013 school year:

- 47% of students in foster care attended two or more schools (a rate 6.5 times that of other students).
- The percentage of foster students who leave through graduation is 39% compared to 72% of other students.
- 29% of students in foster care leave school due to dropping out compared to 8% of other students.
- Students in foster care are almost 3 times as likely to receive special education services, and more than 3 times as likely to receive an out of school suspension.

Q: Why is this data important?

A: The data helps the Texas child welfare system better pinpoint where students need the most help, and provides motivation for the continued collaboration between the Judiciary, Department of Family and Protective Services and the Texas Education Agency.

Q: What can I do to help ensure educational outcomes of students in foster care continue to improve?

A: Judges should inquire about whether a child's education needs and goals are identified and addressed at each permanency hearing before and after final orders. This inquiry is also required by Sections 263.306 and 263.5031 in the Texas Family Code. Also, recognizing the importance of school stability, not only when children enter foster care, but when they change placements while in care, may

help bring down the rate of mobility. Importantly, judges are particularly effective at gathering community stakeholders and encouraging cross-system collaborations.

For more information on statutory provisions regarding school stability, please see the Education Chapter and Judicial Checklist regarding Education of the [Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book](#). Also, link to the [Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide](#), here.

Texas commits to transform education outcomes of students in foster care

Findings from the *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Data Workgroup

Priority

Cross-system data sharing

Sharing essential data across child welfare, education, and court systems is critical to the educational success of students in foster care. In 2012, the *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Data Workgroup was established to assess the educational outcomes of students in care in Texas. This brief uses baseline data to highlight the complexities and challenges that impact students in foster care while providing opportunities for agencies to promote cross-system practices and strategies that improve stability and achievement.

Collaboration

Diverse, multi-disciplinary membership

The *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Data Workgroup includes:



*CPS is a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

Accomplishments

Mobilizing data driven change

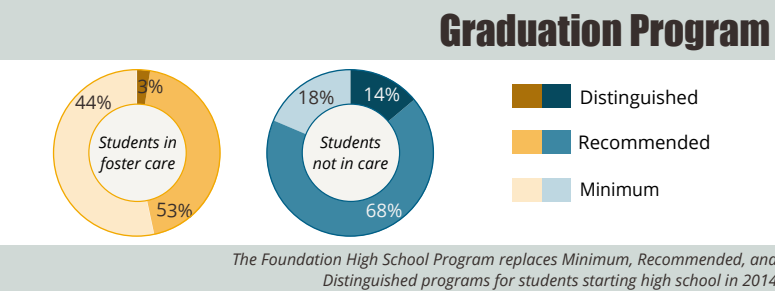
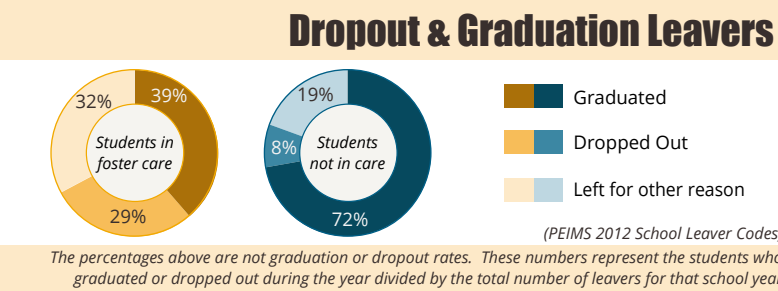
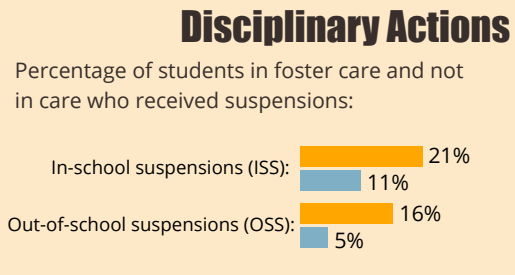
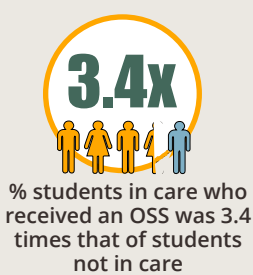
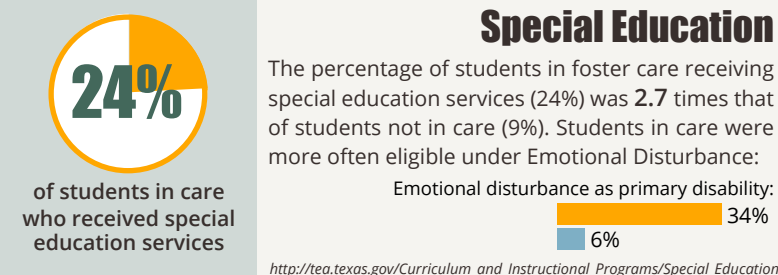
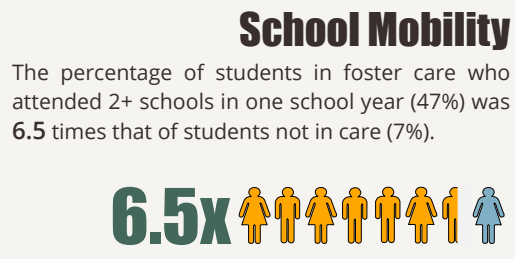
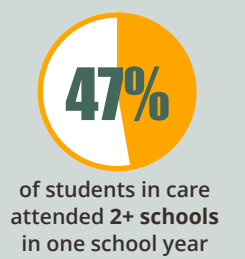
- Participated in national information sharing programs
- Amended Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DFPS and TEA in 2014
- Developed shared definitions across systems
- Mapped data collection timeline
- Identified priority data indicators
- Established 2012-2013 baseline data to measure the educational outcomes of students in foster care

Outcomes from the 2012-2013 school year

■ Students in foster care
 ■ Students not in care



Data sources for this report: Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and the Department of Family and Protective Service's Information Management Protecting Adults and Children in Texas (IMPACT).



Building local cross-system collaborations

Using data to transform education outcomes for students in foster care in Texas

Recommendations

Collect, share, and analyze local data across systems to inform decision-making and improve practices

Organize a group of child welfare, education, and judicial stakeholders in your community

Consider local strengths and challenges, create shared definitions, and brainstorm solutions to meet the needs of your community

Questions to consider

	Schools	Courts	CPS
School Mobility	Do you know your district's foster care liaison and the student's designated education decision-maker? How can foster care liaisons work with school staff to improve transition services within required time frames?	Where is the student enrolled in school? If the student changes placements, what can be done to ensure school stability? Can the student remain in the current school? If not, is there a transition plan in place to ensure prompt record transfers?	Do you coordinate with schools and caregivers to develop either creative transportation solutions that allow a student to remain in the same school or a transition plan if the student changes schools?
Special Education	Who is responsible for making a student's special education decisions? If required, is a surrogate parent appointed and trained?	Do the caregivers, attorneys, surrogate parent, CASA, or other advocates have current information about the student's Individualized Education Program?	What issues are addressed in the student's Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee meetings?
Disciplinary Actions	Do you include trauma-informed training for staff? What prevention and alternative strategies to suspension and expulsion are available to students? Does your school use Response to Intervention and Positive Behavior Support strategies effectively?	What behaviors does the student present in school that lead to a disciplinary action? What services are needed to prevent and address these behaviors?	Do you remind caregivers annually and during the enrollment process to provide a written signed statement of "opting-out" from corporal punishment for each student in foster care?
Dropout Prevention	What evidence-based dropout prevention strategies are in your school plan? When do you review students' course credit accruals? How do you address student needs for tutoring, content mastery, credit recovery, and extra-curricular activities?	What laws are in place to support high school completion? If a student is not on track to graduate, what is needed to support high school completion?	Does a student have a personal graduation plan, and if so, when was it last reviewed? How can you collaborate with schools to facilitate student participation in extra-curricular activities, online courses, credit recovery services, and tutoring?
Graduation Program	Have you talked with the student about their post-secondary goals, aspirations, and options? Is this information reflected in the student's personal graduation plan, current course selection, and graduation program?	Is the student on track to graduate, and what are the student's postsecondary education goals and plans?	What are the student's educational goals and aspirations? Are additional services available to help the student realize these goals?

This brief highlights data collected at the state level as the result of collaboration between child welfare, education, and court systems in Texas. For more information, please see:

Child Protective Services Education Policy: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x15000.asp

Texas Education Agency Foster Care & Student Success: <http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>

Children's Commission education site: <http://education.texaschildrenscommission.gov/>

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