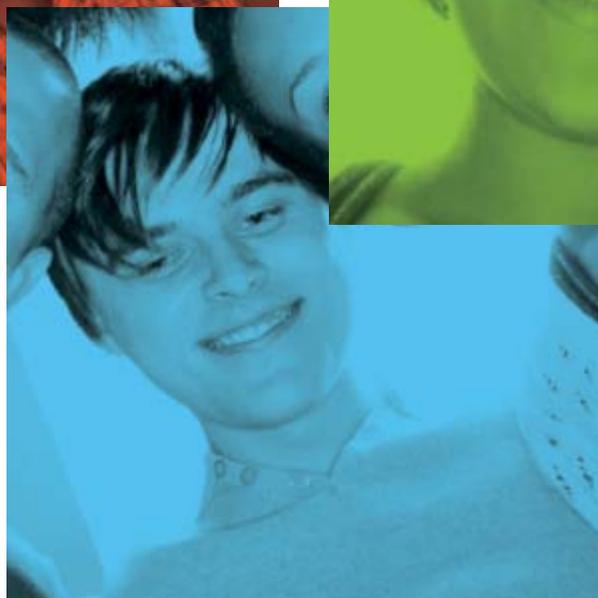
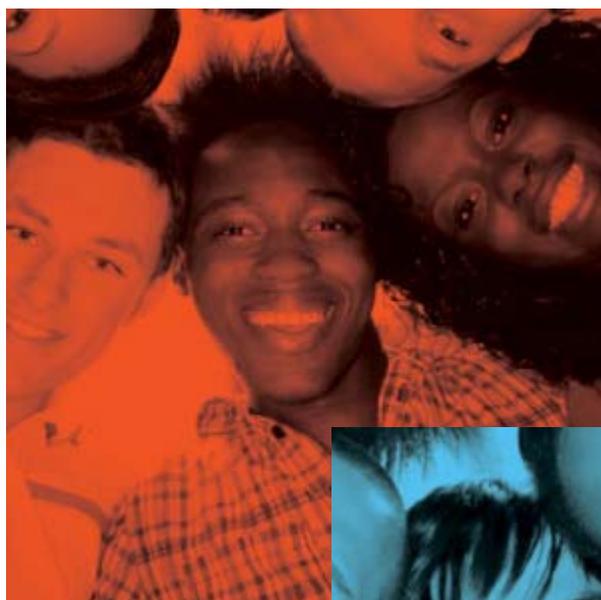


FOSTERING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

An Analysis of Investments in School Climate and Foster Youth Through the Local Control Accountability Plan

By Laura Faer and Marjorie Cohen



FACTS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Foster youth have unique needs and educational challenges:

Disproportionately High Rate of School Disruption

- California foster youth attend an average of eight different schools while in foster care.

Disproportionately High Rate of Exposure to Trauma

- Nationally nearly half (48%) of youth in foster care struggle with emotional or behavioral issues.
- More than 25% of adults who had been foster youth experienced PTSD in the previous year, which is a rate that is twice that of U.S. combat veterans.
 - ◊ Youth subjected to trauma are significantly more likely to be suspended or expelled, struggle with behavior and learning problems, such as increased anxiety, hypervigilance, behavioral impulsivity, and attention, abstract reasoning, and problem solving deficits.

Disproportionately High Rate of Punitive and Exclusionary Discipline

- Nationally, 67% of foster youth have been suspended at least once.
- 2009 data showed that one in four youth in foster care in San Mateo County had been suspended; such youth were ten times more likely to be expelled and 2.5 times more likely to be suspended than their non-foster care counterparts.¹⁴
- 2012-13 Foster Focus data from Sacramento County showed that 15% of foster youth were suspended, three times the state average; nearly half (43%) received at least one disciplinary action in the same school year.
- Youth involved with the child welfare system have a 47% greater rate of delinquency than other youth.

Educational Outcomes Reflect Unmet Needs

- California foster youth are less likely to graduate high school than low-income, EL, and students with disabilities.
- California foster youth have the highest dropout and lowest graduation rates, and a lower proficiency rate for English language arts than all students and low-income students.

Key findings of this report for foster youth in Local Control Accountability Plans include:

Attendance

- Only two of the 64 school districts, Sacramento City Unified and Los Angeles Unified, identified baseline attendance rates for foster youth.
- 32% listed foster youth as a target population for attendance-related goals, either with “all students” or with only other subgroups.
- 9% established a unique attendance goal for foster youth.
- 16% included attendance-related actions specific to foster youth.
- 11% specified expenditures targeting foster youth attendance needs.

Suspensions & Expulsions

- Only one of the 64 districts, Los Angeles Unified, listed baseline suspension data for foster youth. No districts provided the current expulsion rate or any expulsion data for foster youth.
- 25% listed foster youth as a targeted subgroup for a suspension goal and 14% listed foster youth as a targeted subgroup for an expulsion goal applicable to all students or subgroups.
- Only 5% provided suspension goals that were unique for foster youth. Only one district, Temecula Valley Unified included a stand-alone goal specifically addressing the foster youth expulsion rate.
- 17% listed foster youth as a targeted subgroup for a suspension-related action applicable to all students.
- Only two school districts, Temecula Valley Unified and Hacienda La Puente, provided suspension and expulsion reduction actions specifically targeting foster youth.
- Only one district, Temecula Valley, allocated funding to specifically target foster youth suspension and expulsion reductions.

Other School Climate Findings

- Attendance: 59% did not identify either of the required baseline attendance rates. But, nearly two-thirds (63%) identified attendance-related actions for all students
- Suspension: Only 48% included some type of overall baseline suspension data. But, nearly 88% percent provided suspension-related goals for all students.
- Expulsion: Only 36% included some type of expulsion baseline data. But, 66% have expulsion-related goals.
- Research-Based Alternatives: 81% proposed at least one type of research-based alternative discipline practice, PBIS, RJ/P, SEL, and conservative estimates show an investment of \$41,264,509.
- Law Enforcement-Referrals to Police, Citations & Arrests: 38% districts included school resource officers, police officers, probation officers and/or law enforcement equipment in their LCAPs. No school district included baseline referral to law enforcement, citation or arrest data; a number of districts spent the same or more on law enforcement than on research-based alternative discipline strategies.
 - ◊ For example, Inglewood Unified allocated \$2,500,000 (LCFF supplemental grant) for school security officers and cameras, and only \$62,500 (LCFF base grant) on implementing PBIS and a portion of \$150,000 (LCFF base grant) on professional development for PBIS.

Key recommendations for California districts for Year 2 of the Local Control Funding Formula:

- Establish school climate and attendance area baseline needs, goals and actions that account for the unique needs of foster youth.
- Increase investments in research-based, best practices in discipline, such as social emotional learning, trauma-informed strategies, restorative justice, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and prioritize early implementation at schools where foster youth are concentrated.
- Invest in well-trained staff who can be a single, continuous point of contact for foster youth and who can navigate across and coordinate with multiple systems.
- Analyze the impact of and reassess increased investments in school-site law enforcement and refocus funding on research-based strategies that support the social and emotional well-being of foster youth and remove barriers to school stability and prompt enrollment.