



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**February 26, 2020**

**9:30 a.m.**

Multipurpose Room, First 5 LA  
750 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Present:**

Mónica Garcia, Chair  
Fabricio Segovia, Vice Chair  
Judge Akemi Arakaki, representing Judge Victor Greenberg  
Helen Berberian, representing Bobby Cagle  
Jessica Chandler  
Kathy Chantraprabhavej, representing Jonathan Sherin  
Jesus Corral, representing Raymond Leyva  
Lisa Cynkin-Hardy, representing Sylvie de Toledo Hananel  
Pia Escudero, representing Austin Beutner  
Leslie Heimov  
Jeannette Mann  
Barbara Spyrou, Office of Child Protection  
Rachelle Touzard, representing Debra Duardo  
Alex Wilensky, representing Bruce Saltzer

**Speakers and  
Guests:**

Cesar Casarrubias, Pomona Unified School District  
Gary Creel, Azusa Unified School District  
Ana Gutierrez, West Covina Unified School District  
Megan Kirkpatrick, Department of Arts and Culture  
Alaina Moonves-Leb, Alliance for Children's Rights  
Khai Nguyen, Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Loren Solem Kuehl, Department of Children and Family Services  
Steve Sturm, Department of Children and Family Services  
Danielle Wondra, Children Now  
Sally Yoo, Alhambra Unified School District  
  
Monica Banken, Fifth Supervisorial District  
Richard Martinez, Superintendent, Pomona Unified School District

Chair Mónica Garcia brought the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. and welcomed everyone, thanking the Department of Mental Health for sponsoring today's meeting costs, and thanking First 5 LA for providing the meeting space. In the absence of ECC Director Stefanie Gluckman, Barbara Spyrou from the Office of Child Protection is assisting with the meeting.

Garcia then asked ECC members, meeting speakers, and audience members to introduce themselves.

Clean consistent data, Spyrou stated, helps County agencies, school districts, and advocates better understand the needs of vulnerable youth and develop solutions to improve their education outcomes. Today's meeting includes a presentation on state and county data available through the California Department of Education's DataQuest site, a report from members of an important regional alliance making great strides at the school-district level, and details of the significant steps being taken to continue building a combined electronic data-sharing system accessible to school districts and multiple services agencies.

### New Developments to State- and County-Level Foster Youth Education Data

Danielle Wondra from Children Now—a statewide research and advocacy group active in key issues for children and youth—introduced graphs of statewide and county-specific data for the 2018–2019 school year that are attached to and made part of these minutes as Attachment 1. “Because of their life traumas and because each school change resulting from a new placement can cost them up to six months of learning,” Wondra said, “foster youth face unique challenges within the education system.”

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) process, required for school districts since 2013, calls for additional services and supports for three target populations: English-language learners, low-income students, and foster youth. (Funding allocations apply to an unduplicated count, however; foster youth are automatically considered low-income, and so receive no extra bump in dollars.) “This means that we now have more data about youth and their outcomes than we used to,” Wondra noted, “but no significant improvements have really taken place.” About 47,000 foster youth are enrolled in school in California, about one-third of whom (16,000) are in Los Angeles County, comprising about 1% of the overall student population countywide.

#### ➤ Students Chronically Absent

California defines “chronically absent” as a student’s being absent at least 10% of the time during the school year, including both excused and unexcused absences. Historically, absentee rates in kindergarten through grade two have been a strong predictor of ultimate success in school, Leslie Heimov mentioned.

- Statewide, the percentage of K–12 foster students considered chronically absent in 2018–2019 is more than twice as high as for all students—27.7% compared to 12.1%.
- Los Angeles County has slightly higher chronic-absence numbers—28.9% for foster youth compared to 13.8% for all students.
- For most student groups, these rates increased from those of the previous school year.

Research into the *reasons* foster youth are absent from school should be undertaken, Heimov urged, since “didn’t want to go” is not the same as “couldn’t go.” Youth and caregiver voices are vital to any effort in this regard, as older youth may be dealing with probation court appearances, having to be responsible for younger siblings, or being employed with an unpredictable schedule. Chair Garcia suggested a “self-reporting” pilot to discover some of those reasons. Michelle Alferes, part of the Los Angeles County Office of Education county administrative team at Inglewood Unified, also recommended looking at foster-youth data by placement type to see if patterns exist.

➤ Suspended Students

Foster youth also face disproportionate school discipline.

- Statewide, the percentage of all students suspended one or more times (counting each student only once) is only 3.5%, while foster-youth suspensions are more than four times as high, at 15.1%.
- Los Angeles County has lower absolute numbers, though a higher disparity. Foster youth are suspended at more than five times the rate of their peers—11.4% compared to 2.0% of all students.

➤ Students Testing at Grade Level

Students are evaluated periodically throughout their school career with California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) tests of academic performance (established in 2014 to replace the Standardized Testing and Reporting, or STAR, program).

- Statewide testing of students in eleventh grade in 2018–2019 showed 57% of students not in foster care performing at grade level in English language arts, as were 32% of all non-foster students in mathematics. The numbers for foster youth were significantly lower, with 23% testing at grade level in English language arts and only 6% in mathematics.
- Data for Los Angeles County were nearly identical. Of all non-foster students, 56% tested at grade level in English language arts and 32% in mathematics; of foster youth, 22% were at grade level in English language arts and 6% in mathematics.

➤ Students Finishing High School in Four Years

Figures 7 and 8 of Attachment 1 break out the four-year cohort of students who entered ninth grade and, four years later (in 2018–2019), finished twelfth grade in the same or a different school. In both California and Los Angeles County, foster-youth graduation rates have increased about 3% from previous years, and Wondra estimated that GED and other certifications add about 2% to the foster-youth four-year graduation rate. Five-year graduation rates are also available from DataQuest for the current school year onward, which Wondra said adds 6 to 7% to foster-youth graduation rates.

- In both California and Los Angeles County, foster-youth four-year graduations in 2018–2019 lagged behind those of all other tracked populations (migrant youth, socioeconomically disadvantaged [low-income] youth, homeless youth, students with disabilities, and English learners).
- Statewide, 84.5% of all youth graduated in four years, while only 56.0% of foster youth did.
- Los Angeles County's results were a couple of points lower—81.8% of all youth graduated in four years, while only 54.1% of foster youth did.

Using Local Data to Drive Systems Change

Thanks to a grant from the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (a statewide agency working to strengthen California's public school system), a group of local school districts—Alhambra Unified, Azusa Unified, Bonita Unified, Long Beach Unified, Pomona

Unified, and West Covina Unified—formed the Los Angeles Foster Youth Professional Learning Network to discuss “lessons learned” from using local data for systems change.

The third year of the grant, explained Alaina Moonves-Leb from the Alliance for Children’s Rights, which facilitates the network, is being spent developing a systems-change guide. She referred to the presentation handout (attached to and made part of these minutes as Attachment 2) and asked district representatives to introduce themselves.

Pomona’s Director of Pupil Resources Cesar Casarrubias spoke of the reputation that alternative education (continuation schools, etc.) has historically had as a “dumping ground for students we don’t want,” as he put it. His district’s current philosophy, however, is that its schools should provide systems of support for all students, and “all means all.” To solve challenges for students arriving with partial credits or having transportation issues, Pomona Unified has opened satellite campuses on all comprehensive high school sites through its dependent charter School of Extended Educational Options. This makes it possible for students coming in with three partial credits in a particular subject, for example, to earn the two additional credits needed for graduation via individualized study with teachers on the same campus as the comprehensive high school they normally attend.

Gary Creel, Director of Child Welfare and Attendance at Azusa Unified, also chimed in on alternative education. When began his career, he said, “no kid on probation was *allowed* to go to a regular high school. That was illegal.” Now, foster youth and their education rights holders in Azusa are given the option of a comprehensive high school versus a continuation high school, depending on the best interest of the specific child.

A comprehensive assessment at the time a student enrolls is critical, network partners agreed, as is training for all school employees—administrative, pupil-services, and data-analysis staff as well as teachers—educating them to consider all facets of each foster youth’s life.

- Over the first two years of the network project, West Covina Unified reduced its percentage of foster youth in alternative schools from 60% to 30%; Pomona Unified’s dropped from 57% to 2%.
- In a single year, Bonita Unified increased its foster-youth graduation rate from 52.6% to 68.4%, while Azusa Unified raised that rate from 29% to 83%.
- Alhambra Unified increased the number of youth receiving partial credits at school exit from 66% to 83%.

For a district to begin building its baseline knowledge, it must identify and tag all foster youth. Although the LCFF definition of ‘foster youth’ includes youth with open dependency-court cases plus youth with open delinquency-court cases if they are residing in a suitable placement, the provisions of AB 490 broaden the probation-involved pool to youth with open delinquency cases living in any placement. All youth falling within the broader AB 490 definition should be served by a district’s foster-youth programs, regarding of whether or not they ‘count’ for LCFF.

Relying solely on individuals or other systems to identify these youth may result in incomplete or inaccurate data—the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), for instance, is sometimes not up to date—and using ‘snapshot’ or point-in-time data generally results in a substantial undercount of foster youth who transition in and out of a district through-

out a given school year. Official records are vital, especially because foster children residing with relatives may not self-identify as foster youth, and close family members may not want the children living with them even to know they are in the foster system. If the children themselves are unaware and caregivers do not disclose, it's very likely both will miss out on available resources.

Giving thought to how labels may be perceived and remaining sensitive to whatever trauma the child and family has experienced is a must for those collecting information, as is keeping that information private as much as possible and limiting access to it. ECC member Jessica Chandler recommended working with the Los Angeles County Youth Commission, when it is formed, as its commissioners will be young people with lived experience in the child-welfare or juvenile-justice systems who could offer suggestions.

If other partners wish to assist with developing the network's systems-change guide, they were asked to contact ECC staff person Barbara Spyrou at [bspyrou@ocp.lacounty.gov](mailto:bspyrou@ocp.lacounty.gov) or Alaina Moonves-Leb at [a.moonves@kids-alliance.org](mailto:a.moonves@kids-alliance.org).

#### Update on the Educational Passport System (EPS)

For the past four years, the Technology Services division of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has been working with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to develop, implement, and improve the Educational Passport System (EPS), a secure, centralized online repository for education and other information about the county's foster, probation, and homeless youth. LACOE Technology Services director Khai Nguyen's presentation is attached to and made part of these minutes as Attachment 3.

EPS is slated to replace DCFS's Student Information Tracking System (SITS) on March 24 and will also be available then as a mobile app on County cell phones for social workers in the field. The system functions as a sort of digital 'cume folder,' containing student demographics, enrollment data, current course loads, transcripts, attendance records, test scores, uploaded electronic documents, and CALPADS and DCFS data for homeless and system-involved youth. It is currently being used for data-sharing by all 81 school districts within Los Angeles County, 27 charter schools, and the nine campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District.

"This gives us an opportunity to match all our kids throughout Los Angeles County," said Steve Sturm from DCFS's early education programs unit. "We'll know where our foster youth are [in school], how often they move, and how they're doing academically." A 20-minute training video is being rolled out to social workers, added Loren Solem Kuehl, also from DCFS, with Sturm commenting that the EPS app is intuitive and easy to use.

- An automated alert system within EPS is a possible enhancement, although when a foster youth transfers between schools, it already sends an electronic notification to both schools, visible both in the desktop interface and on the mobile app.
- To help populate EPS's 'higher education' tab, Jessica Petrass from John Burton Advocates for Youth suggested a direct data match with the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) for grant applications and tracking.
- Nguyen has approached the courts about being both a consumer and contributor to EPS, but concerns remain about access to confidential information possibly prejudicing dispositions or rulings in certain cases.

- Leslie Heimov from the Children’s Law Center believes the law supports access to EPS for minors’ counsel, and her attorneys would welcome that access; she will pursue this possibility with Nguyen.
- All students in LACOE court schools (at juvenile halls and probation camps) are documented in EPS, which is very helpful when they return to schools in their home communities.

#### Member Updates

- Pia Escudero from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) updated attendees on transportation for foster youth to their schools of origin when appropriate, the district’s advocacy in Sacramento for additional transportation funds, and a further funding ‘ask’ to create an electronic enrollment system so parents and students need not fill out the requisite 29 forms by hand whenever youth change schools.
- Rachelle Touzard announced the launch of a new philanthropic arm supporting LACOE—the Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation, promoting deeper innovative partnerships with communities to support schools—and suggested that the foundation’s president be invited to speak at a future ECC meeting. LACOE additionally received a grant to become the lead agency to support foster-youth coordinating services throughout California, offering technical assistance to other counties to build their capacity. LACOE’s six regional learning networks have expanded to include more than 350 independent charter schools as well as the county’s 80 public school districts, partnering to draw out expertise and best practices.
- Megan Kirkpatrick from the Department of Arts and Culture explained the partnership with her department, the Office of Child Protection, the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to build ‘communities of wellness’ at three high schools with high rates of foster and trauma-affected youth. The project provides healing-informed arts education and programming as a core strategy to support the well-being of students, teachers, staff, and families, offering support through professional development and healing-informed student art instruction. After outlining the arts offerings at each school, she thanked the facilitators and clinicians at DMH, the OCP and its supportive team, and ECC members for their continued enthusiasm for this project.

#### Next Meeting

The Education Coordinating Council’s next meeting is scheduled for:

**Wednesday, April 24, 2020**  
**9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Room 743, Hahn Hall of Administration**  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

#### Adjournment

There being no public comment, Chair Garcia adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

# Education of Children and Youth in Foster Care\*



Foster youth face unique challenges that prevent them from attending school.

Figure 1. Percent of Students Chronically Absent in California

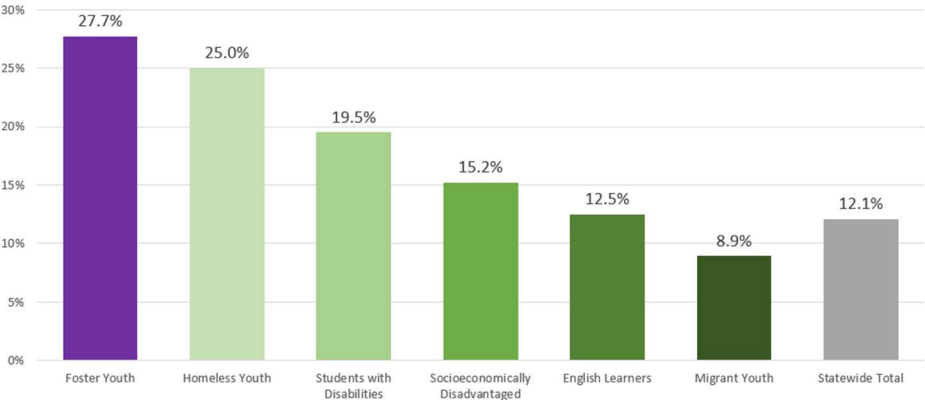
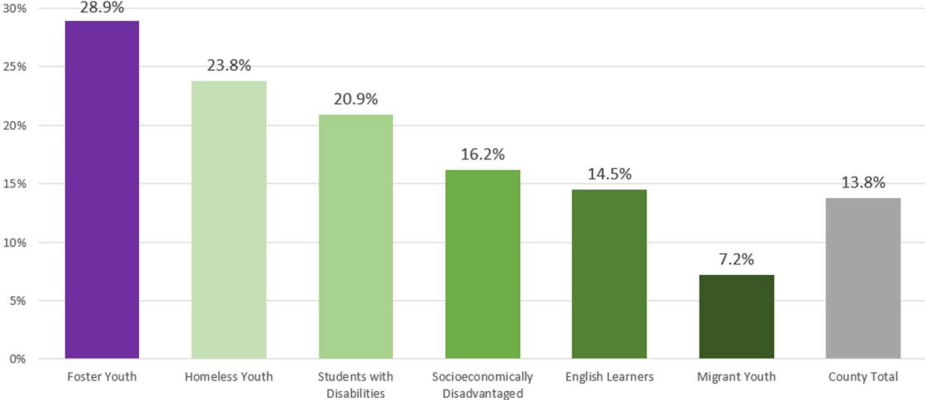


Figure 2. Percent of Students Chronically Absent in Los Angeles County



\* All data are from California Department of Education, DataQuest, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

Foster youth face disproportionate school discipline.

Figure 3. Percent of Students Suspended in California

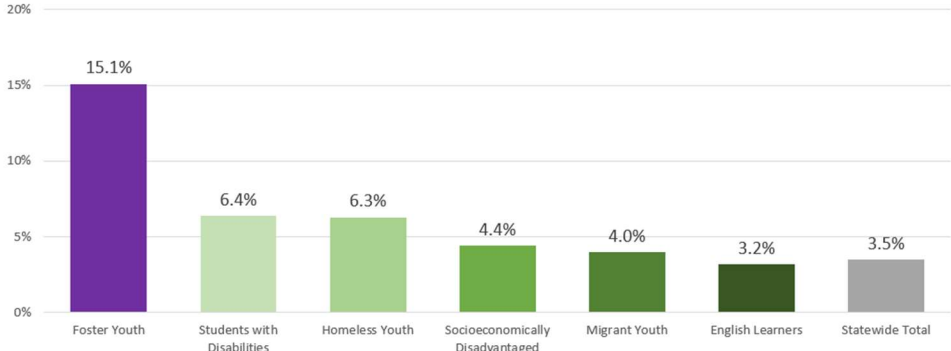
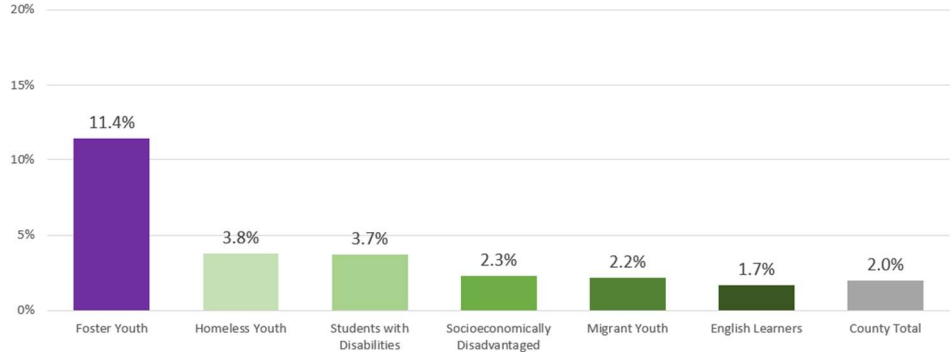


Figure 4. Percent of Students Suspended in Los Angeles County





Foster youth struggle to stay on track in school.

Figure 5. Percent of Students at Grade Level in California

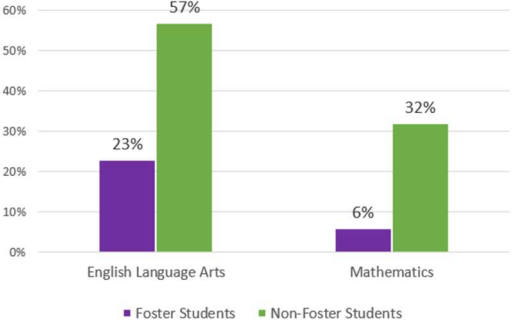
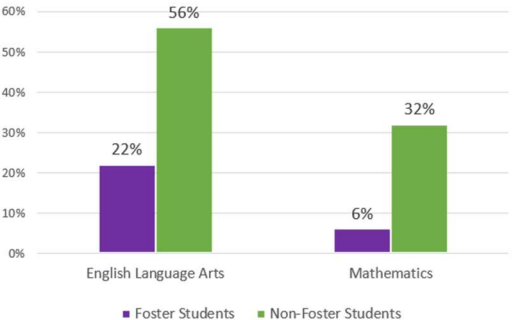


Figure 6. Percent of Students at Grade Level in Los Angeles County



Too few foster youth finish high school on time.

Figure 7. Percent of Students Graduated in Four Years in California

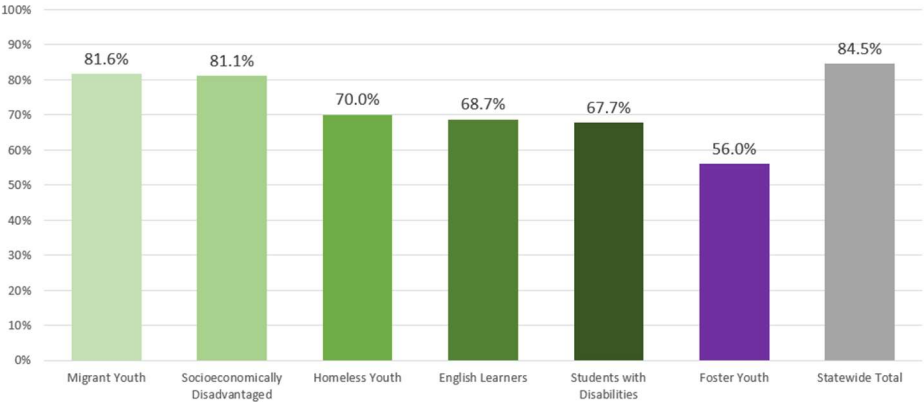
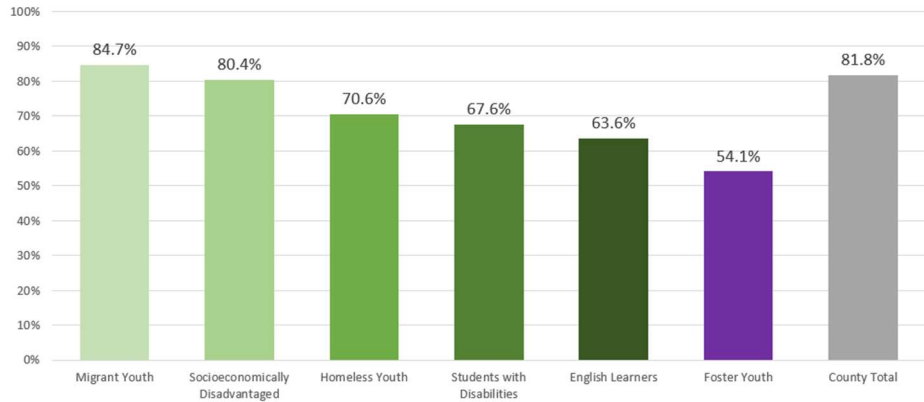


Figure 8. Percent of Students Graduated in Four Years in Los Angeles County



For more information, contact Danielle Wondra at 213-973-5405 or [dwondra@childrennow.org](mailto:dwondra@childrennow.org).



**Azusa**  
Unified School District



# Making Foster Youth Data Work for your District to Improve Student Outcomes



## Presented By

Jill Rowland, Education Program Director, Alliance for Children's Rights

Alaina Moonves-Leb, Senior Staff Attorney, Alliance for Children's Rights

Garry Creel, Director of Child Welfare and Attendance, Azusa Unified School District

Mark Rodgers, Director Specialized Student Services, Bonita Unified School District

Cesar Casarrubias, Director of Pupil Resources, Pomona Unified School District

Ana Gutierrez, Foster/Homeless Youth liaison, West Covina Unified School District

# IMPROVING FOSTER YOUTH OUTCOMES

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Lessons from a Los Angeles County Foster Youth  
Learning Network

# Foster Youth Learning Network

- Focus on Foster Youth
- 6 Los Angeles County School Districts
- Meet Monthly as a network and 1:1 with each district
- 2.5 Years of Developing Internal District Systems
- 3<sup>rd</sup> (current year) Developing Systems Change Guide

# Network Foster Youth Outcomes

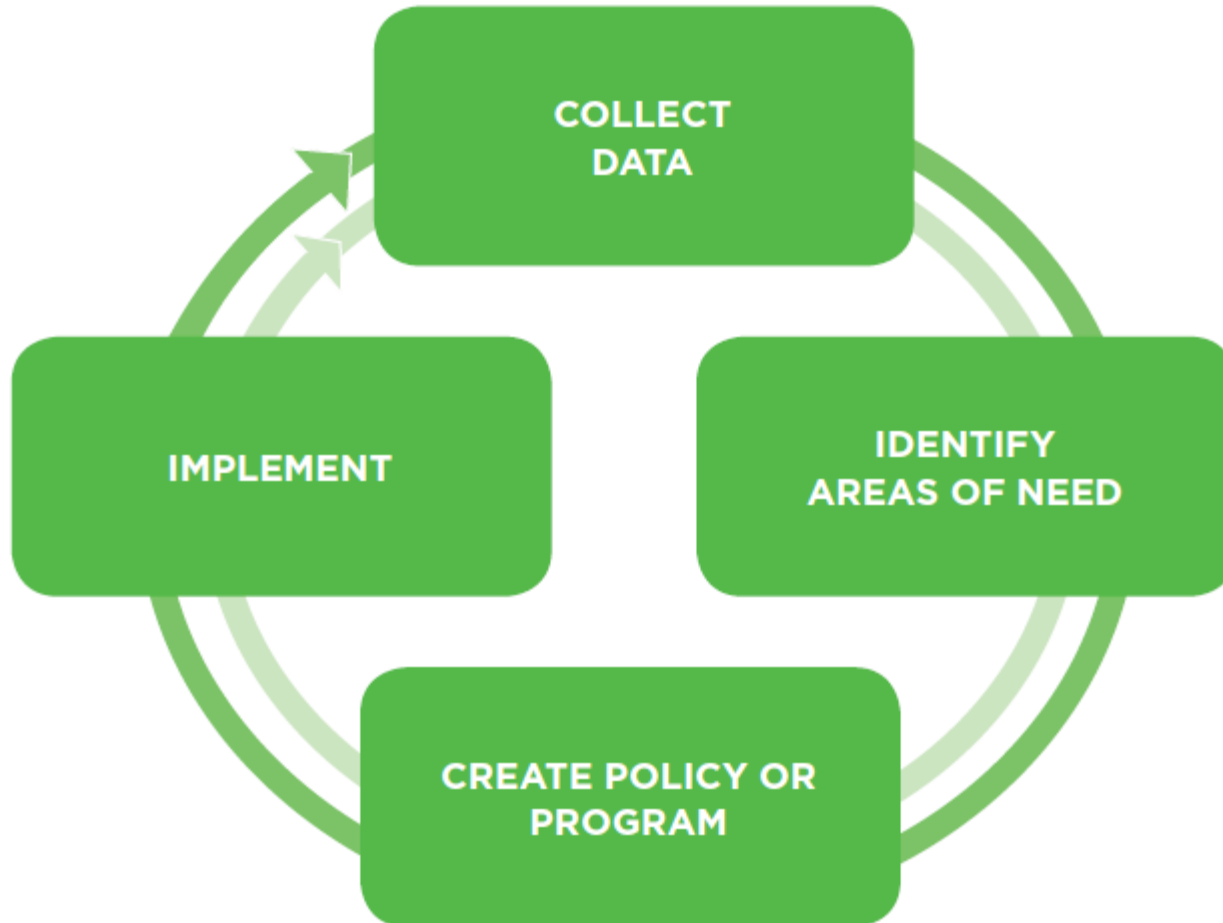
- POMONA: Reduced the number of Foster Youth in Alternative Schools from **57% to 2%**
- BONITA: Increased Foster Youth graduation rate from **52.6% to 68.4%** in a single year
- AZUSA: Increased Foster Youth graduation rate from **29% to 83%**
- WEST COVINA: Reduced the percentage of foster youth in alternative schools from **60% to 30%**
- ALHAMBRA: Increased the number of youth receiving partial credits at exit from the school from **66% to 83%**

# Los Angeles Foster Youth Professional Learning Network: Systems Change Blueprint

- Identify and tag district foster (and probation) youth
- Collect and analyze local data to identify needs
- Build/modify programs to meet their needs
- Use continuous improvement cycle to test/improve programs



## ATTACHMENT 2



# IDENTIFYING FOSTER YOUTH

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# Building Baseline Knowledge

- Review of legal requirements or relevant educational principles to ensure all participants begin discussion from the same place
- LEAs review existing FY policies/practices (if any)

## Foster Youth Education Toolkit



Updated  
October  
2016



# Building Baseline Knowledge: Identifying and Tagging Foster Youth

The diagram consists of two overlapping circles. The larger, outer circle is dark orange and labeled 'AB 490'. The smaller, inner circle is a lighter shade of orange and labeled 'LCFF'. The two circles overlap in the center. Text describing the categories for each circle is placed within their respective areas.

## LCFF

\*Open Dependency (300)

\*Open Delinquency (602)  
with Suitable Placement

## AB 490

\*Open Delinquency (602)  
living in any other placement

### Key Points:

- Any youth who falls within the narrower LCFF definition also falls within the broader definition entitling them to the protections described in this toolkit.
- The difference between the two definitions is that the LCFF definition excludes some probation youth who are protected under AB 490 and related rights.
- Any youth who falls within the broad definition under AB 490 and related laws should be served by a district's foster youth programs, regardless of whether they "count" for LCFF.

# Collecting Baseline Data

- More than a data match: Why is it important to have your own system for identifying and tagging foster youth?
  - Other Systems Offer Incomplete and/or Inaccurate Data
  - Additional Information Tracking
- Process and Practice: What lessons/best practices have you learned for tagging these youth?
  - Notification Process

# Collecting Baseline Data

- Special Considerations: How have equity and trauma considerations factored into these practices?
  - Labels Used
  - Controlling Access
- Centralization vs. Decentralization: what are smaller/larger district best practices?
  - Where Tagging is Happening
  - How Much Automation is Involved

# Statewide Policy Considerations

- Considered common struggles
- Worked through solutions
- Shared information
- Prepared recommendations
  - Probation Information Sharing
  - Streamlining Notifications

# ONCE YOUTH ARE TAGGED...

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Using local data points to improve practices and outcomes



## Using Data to Drive Systems Improvement

- Identified 5 local data points to be collected across districts (# of FY served each year, issuing partial credits, 1 year graduation rate, school stability, enrollment in alternative education programs)
- Worked throughout 3 years to determine how to collect and utilize this data to improve foster youth outcomes
- In current year, refining and sharing through best practices guide

# Enrollment and Educational Placement

- Basics of Law:
  - Immediate Enrollment
  - Least Restrictive Environment
- Why is this important?
  - Instability
  - Equity of Access and Opportunity

# Enrollment and Educational Placement

- Best Practices Districts Have Developed
  - Orientation Process
  - Expanding Options on Comprehensive Campus
- Policy Recommendations
  - State Systems that Allow for More Flexible Enrollment

# Partial Credits

- Basics of Law: Foster Youth have the right to partial credits went they enter or exit a district mid-term
- Why is this important to measure?
  - Helps youth stay on track for high school graduation
  - Can be used as an early indicator for improving graduation rates
  - Make sure youth get credit for work they did
  - Encourages youth to be engaged in school and completing school work, even if they are only at a school for a short period of time

# Partial Credits

- Best Practices Districts Have Developed
  - Automated Calculations
  - Notification Systems
- Policy Recommendations
  - AB 150

# Reflections on Using Local Data

- How have you used your local data to improve programs/services/policies for foster youth?
- How do you use data to engage internal and external stakeholders?

# Systems Change Best Practices Guide

- Coming Soon!
- Developed by Network
- Topics: Identification and Tagging, Enrollment and School Placement, Data Collection and Use, Partial Credits, Graduation, School of Origin
- Includes: Legal Requirements, Best Practices, Sample Policies, Procedures, and Tools

# Contact Us

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# EDUCATIONAL PASSPORT SYSTEM (EPS) UPDATE

FEBRUARY 26, 2020

**KHAI NGUYEN**

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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## Educational Passport System

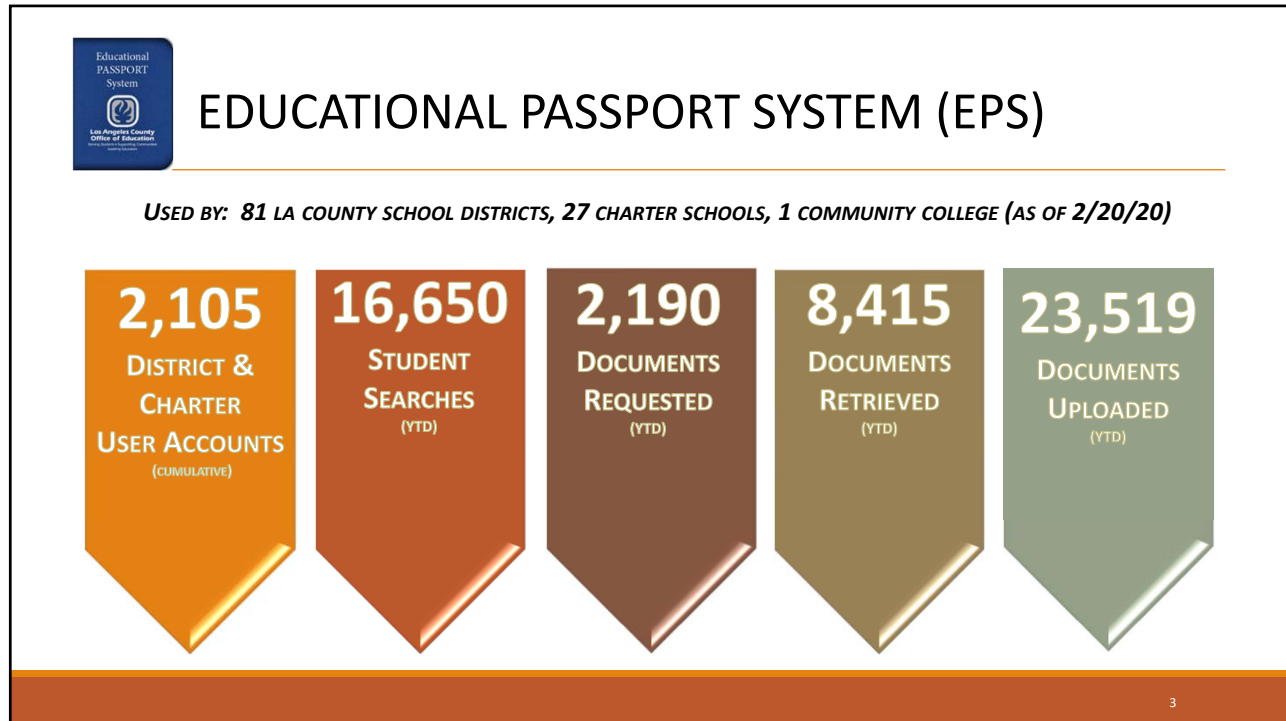
### What is it?

- ✓ Secure data sharing system: foster youth educational records
- ✓ Partnership: LACOE/DCFS/Districts/Probation
- ✓ Includes Homeless Youth
- ✓ Ability to share documents

### What does it contain?

- ✓ Student demographic & school enrollment data
- ✓ Current courses – transcripts – attendance – test scores
- ✓ Uploaded electronic documents
- ✓ CALPADS and DCFS data

2



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**EDUCATIONAL PASSPORT SYSTEM (EPS)**

**ITEMS IN-PROGRESS:**

- Extending data sharing of Foster Youth Student population in LA County
- Supporting data collection and reporting for the Community Schools initiative
- Riverside County Child Services and school districts implementation
- DCFS implementation (*March 2020, 7,800+ staff*)
  1. EPS Web-based system to replace the current Student Information Tracking System (SITS)
  2. Children's Social Worker (CSW) Mobile App available on County cell phones

4

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## EDUCATIONAL PASSPORT SYSTEM (EPS)

### ***ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION: UNIVERSAL LOCAL DATA MATCHING IDENTIFIER***

1. Creation of a standard universal identification process for **student** records exchanged between systems will allow us to knit pieces of data into one coherent whole.
2. Current practice “fuzzy matching” - Several elements of student identification are used to try and make a “best fit” match.
3. When “fuzzy matching” is not successful data must be *linked* manually one-record-at-a-time.
4. A universal data match process would allow **ACCURATE** data analysis across multiple systems.

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## EDUCATIONAL PASSPORT SYSTEM (EPS)



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6