



THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS



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POSTCARD: Provided by Foster Care Alumni of America - "School gave me more than just an education."



CHAPTER 11

The School Experience: Promoting Student Success

CREATING A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT THAT IS SENSITIVE TO THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

Students come into foster care through no fault of their own, but their status as “foster children” can be a source of deep shame and stigma. School personnel play an important role in being sensitive and creating a school environment that is emotionally safe and supportive of students who experience foster care.

REMEMBER TO:

- ✓ Maintain confidentiality.
- ✓ Be mindful of the impact that family-based school assignments and activities have on students.
- ✓ Avoid negative stigmatization and assumptions.
- ✓ Be aware of the reasons why a student in foster care may miss school and how it might impact coursework.
- ✓ Take time to build relationships and establish trust with students in foster care.
- ✓ Provide students with choices and include them in decision-making.
- ✓ Promote information related to foster care and activities, supports, resources, and scholarships available in school counseling centers, public places, district website, and student portals.

✓ MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY.

- It is important that a student is not publicly labeled as a foster child nor attention brought to the fact that the student is in the foster care system.
- Avoid discussing private student matters in public places, such as a hallways and open office spaces, where confidential information may be overheard by school staff and/or students.
- Do not use public means to notify students of appointments and visitors related to their DFPS cases.
- Refrain from asking students personal questions related to why they are in foster care. If a student shares this very personal information, it should be completely up to them and not because school personnel initiated the discussion. All information should be kept confidential.

✓ BE MINDFUL OF THE IMPACT THAT FAMILY-BASED SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES HAVE ON STUDENTS.

No matter the reasons for entering foster care, school assignments and activities that assume all students live with their birth family or know their family history may present challenges for students in foster care. Assignments such as creating a family tree or a Mother’s Day card or giving a presentation about a memorable family vacation can be very difficult. Educators should differentiate these activities with a choice board or menu of activities to allow for student choice without alienating any students.

✓ AVOID NEGATIVE STIGMATIZATION AND ASSUMPTIONS.

Students in foster care can be negatively labeled and stigmatized in school and in other community settings. Although not necessarily intended, these negative stigmatizations and resulting biases can be detrimental to a student's well-being and academic success. See the chart below for common assumptions and ways to address them.

COMMON ASSUMPTIONS	UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE	PREFERRED ACTION
ENROLLMENT		
Students in foster care will only be enrolled in the new school for a short period of time.	Enrollment is delayed.	Ensure that enrollment occurs in a timely manner. No consideration should be given to the duration of attendance at the new school.
CONTINUITY OF SERVICE		
Students do not need accommodations, modifications, or scheduling changes.	The student's educational experience is disrupted.	Students should have the same course schedule including endorsements, enrichment, and extra-curricular activities. Services provided by special programs should also continue with the same guidelines and procedures.
GRADUATION PROGRAM		
Students in foster care do not have post-secondary education goals. ¹⁴⁶	Students do not achieve post-secondary success. Students do not graduate with endorsements.	Ensure that the endorsement students select matches their interest and promotes post-secondary success in their career, college, or military endeavors. ¹⁴⁷



TIP: Promote post-graduation career and education messaging and use asset- and strength- based approaches to encourage the academic dreams of middle and high school students in foster care (See *Chapter 13: Transitioning from Foster Care to a Successful Adulthood & Post-Secondary Education Opportunities*, on page 138.)



[Confronting Stereotypes of Youth in Foster Care](#) is a great video that can be shared to increase awareness about the stereotypes and stigmas students often face.

✓ BE AWARE OF THE REASONS WHY A STUDENT IN FOSTER CARE MAY MISS SCHOOL AND HOW IT MIGHT IMPACT COURSEWORK.

Students in foster care may miss school due to parent and sibling visits, court dates, therapy, and other appointments. These absences are excused if the activity was ordered by the court. Ensure that the appropriate documentation is submitted for attendance purposes. LEA staff and ESC Foster Care Champions should work together to ensure the student is able to make up coursework missed due to these activities.



Note: Caseworkers do their best to ensure school is not interrupted for visits or other appointments.

TIP: LEA Foster Care Liaisons should consider providing information regarding important testing dates to the DFPS Regional Education Specialists and other child welfare stakeholders. School attendance is especially important around state-mandated testing periods. School attendance is also important during benchmark testing periods, as benchmark testing monitors student academic progress to determine if additional interventions are needed.

✓ TAKE TIME TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND ESTABLISH TRUST WITH STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE.

- Students may have a difficult time trusting adults and relationships. Students in foster care have had adults disappoint them and may be reluctant to interact.
- Take the opportunity to celebrate birthdays, personal accomplishments, and student successes! Encouragement and support are essential elements of building rapport and trust.
- Research demonstrates the importance of a trusted, caring, supportive adult as a critical factor determining the success of students in foster care.
- Mentors serve an important role in supporting a student's social and emotional needs. Prioritize students in foster care for your district or community mentoring program.
- Discuss a student's positive attributes with them and communicate these to caregivers, caseworkers, and other adults involved in the student's life.



TIP: A great way to be a part of a high school student's success is by participating in a DFPS-sponsored meeting called a Circle of Support, if invited by the student (*see Transitional Living Services Described, on page 138*).

✓ PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH CHOICES AND INCLUDE THEM IN DECISION-MAKING.

Students in foster care may experience a sense of loss and powerlessness. Educators and supportive adults can use positive youth development practices that provide choices and include youth in decision-making processes.

✓ PROMOTE INFORMATION RELATED TO FOSTER CARE AND ACTIVITIES, SUPPORTS, RESOURCES, AND SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE IN SCHOOL COUNSELING CENTERS, PUBLIC PLACES, DISTRICT WEBSITE, AND STUDENT PORTALS.

Students may not be identified publicly as being in foster care. However, providing information about resources available for students in foster care at counseling centers or similar settings keeps students informed of available supports without singling them out or invading their privacy. It also lets the students know they are supported and valued on their campus.

PROGRAMMATIC SCHOOL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

Compensatory education services available for students must be described in the LEA or campus improvement plan. School staff may recommend that funds be set aside for students in foster care to participate in academic and enrichment programs that promote well-being of the whole child. For more information, see the [TEA State Compensatory Education](#) webpage.

Students may be eligible for special programs and services, such as Special Education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and/or Gifted and Talented services.

College and Career Readiness Programs will afford students several more opportunities, such as military preparedness courses, advanced placement courses, dual credit opportunities, and Career and Technical Education (CTE).



Visit www.tea.texas.gov for more information on specific student programs and eligibility requirements.

LEAS SHOULD PROVIDE SERVICES TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC SUCCESS THROUGH:

- ▷ Tutoring and assessment intervention activities.
- ▷ Supplemental reading or math programs.
- ▷ Credit recovery programs.
- ▷ School counselors, parent support specialists, social workers, and/or student support teams.
- ▷ Home visitation to engage parents or caregivers in improving academic achievement.
- ▷ Coordinating community resources such as mentors and advocates.
- ▷ Out-of-school opportunities such as academic camps, summer school, Saturday school, and competitions.
- ▷ Providing direct individual, group, and crisis counseling.

Regardless of the funding source used for supportive services, all programs and supports should use evidence-based strategies that help increase a student's academic achievement and maintain advancement toward on-time promotion and high school completion. These strategies are discussed more fully in the following section.



RESOURCES: Additional Supports

[The Texas State Compensatory Education program](#)

[Bilingual and English as a Second Language Education Programs](#)

[Special Education](#) (See Chapter 12.)

[Gifted/Talented Education](#)

[Highly Mobile, At-Risk, and Mental Health Supports](#)

IMPLEMENTING ACADEMIC SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTION ACCORDING TO STATE LAW

According to [TEC Code § 25.007](#), students in foster care who move from one school to another are faced with special challenges in learning and future achievement. The law requires TEA to assist these transitions by providing a list of required supports.

To support the implementation of this law, [Commissioner Rules Concerning Transition Assistance for Highly Mobile Students Who Are Homeless or in Substitute Care](#) were adopted into Chapter 89, Adaptations for Special Populations Subchapter FF of the Texas Administrative Code in 2019 and must be followed by all districts and open-enrollment charter schools.

These rules require LEAs to mitigate transitional barriers in order to support learning and academic achievement for students in foster care, particularly when students transition to new schools.



Reminder: The term “foster care” is being used throughout this guide to refer to all children and youth in DFPS conservatorship/substitute care. This next section uses language from the Texas Education Code (TEC) and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Commissioner Rules. Because the term “substitute care” is used in addition to the term “foster care” in the Texas Education Code, it is also used within this section when describing these provisions.



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS OR IN SUBSTITUTE CARE



TAC § 89.1603, Transfer of Student Records and Transcripts

LEAs must ensure that copies of student records are made available to the receiving school.

Schools are required to transfer student records within 10 working days of receipt of a request from the receiving school (*see Chapter 6 for more information on enrollment and Chapter 8 for more information on records transfers for students in foster care*).



TAC § 89.1605, Development of Systems to Ease Transitions and Establish Procedures to Lessen the Adverse Impact of Movement of a Student

LEAs must develop specific supports and systems to ease the transition during the first two weeks of enrollment:

- ✓ **Provide** the student and caregiver with a **welcome packet** that includes information about enrolling in extracurricular activities, club activities, information on fee waivers, tutoring opportunities, the student code of conduct, and contact information for pertinent school staff such as counselors, nurses, social workers, the foster care liaison, the homeless liaison, the principal and any assistant principal, and other related contacts.
- ✓ **Facilitate introductions** of the student to faculty, other students, and to the school environment while maintaining student privacy and confidentiality. Introductions can be facilitated by school faculty, a campus-based student leader, or student ambassador.
- ✓ **Ensure** processes are in place for students who qualify to receive **nutritional benefits** upon enrollment and expedite communication with the school nutrition coordinator to ensure students are not charged in error and do not experience delays in receiving these benefits.
- ✓ **Hold an enrollment conference** with the student in the first two weeks of enrollment or within the first two weeks after the student is identified as being in substitute care (LEAs may have similar processes, called something other than an enrollment conference, that can be adapted and implemented to achieve the same goals).

Enrollment Conference Described

The enrollment conference as required by **TAC § 89.1605** must occur within the first two weeks of enrollment or within the first two weeks of the student being identified as in substitute care and shall not delay or impede the enrollment of the student. This could be an opportunity to personally provide a welcome packet, check on how the student is adjusting, identify whether the student was receiving services from other special programs (e.g: special education, EL, dyslexia, 504, G/T, etc.) at the previous school, monitor academic progress, and share important resources with the family.

The enrollment conference may be composed of:

- School administrators
- Homeless or Foster Care Liaisons
- Social workers
- Teachers
- Counselors
- Dropout prevention specialists
- Attendance and/or truancy officers
- The caregiver or case manager
- The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) designated educational decision-maker
- The DFPS caseworker, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteer, or other volunteer as applicable
- A parent and/or guardian, unless the caseworker indicates the parent's and/or guardian's rights to participate have been restricted by the court

During an enrollment conference the school could also address the following:

- Credit recovery
- Credit completion
- Attendance plans
- Trauma-informed interventions
- Student interests and strengths
- Discipline or behavior concerns
- Previous successes
- College readiness
- Social and emotional supports
- LEA policies relating to transfers and withdrawals
- Communication preferences with parents and/or guardians



Reminder: School staff should remember that decisions about a student's special education eligibility or services may only be made by a properly constituted admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee.



TIP: The enrollment conference provides an opportunity to communicate in a confidential manner about court dates, behavior interventions, DFPS supports, and other information that may impact a student's academic success and progress.

TAC § 89.1607, Award of Credit

Schools must also do the following:

- ✓ Develop a credit recovery plan for students who were denied credits outside the district or charter school.
- ✓ Create a course transition plan for students who have been denied credit.
- ✓ Ensure that school staff engage with student, parent, or guardian, as applicable, to develop a credit recovery plan upon enrollment if the student has a credit deficit that would impede on-time promotion or graduation.

- ✓ Comply with TEC, § 28.025(i), concerning the award of diplomas for students who are homeless or in substitute care who are in Grade 11 or 12.
- ✓ Develop and administer a personal graduation plan for each student in junior high or middle school for whom a PGP is required in accordance with TEC § 28.0212.

Additionally, a student in foster care who is not likely to receive a high school diploma before the fifth school year following the student's enrollment in grade nine as determined by the district must have the student's course credit accrual and personal graduation plan (PGP) reviewed.

When developing the PGP, the school has the opportunity to communicate with the caregiver and student to:

- Identify educational goals for the student.
- Discuss and plan for the instructional program, including courses needed to meet graduation requirements.

For high school students, promote college and workforce readiness and career placement and advancement. The plan should also facilitate the student's transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Additional foster care-specific supports and resources are discussed in Chapter 13.

Proportional Credit and Credit by Exam Opportunities

LEAs are required to adopt a local policy for awarding course credit — including credit for a course that was earned prior to the student enrolling in or transferring to a new school, examine how credit is awarded based on satisfactorily meeting all state and local requirements, provide opportunities for administration of credit by examinations at any point of the school year, and award credit proportionately to a student in foster care who successfully completes only half of a course while enrolled at another school.



When a school move is required, coordination between DFPS and the school should ensure there is a process to analyze the current course work and ensure that the student's grades, attendance, and related support services are maintained in the transition. Stakeholders should work around LEA testing windows to ensure that students can complete any pending assessments.

Districts and schools may use online credit repair or recovery programs, the [Texas Virtual School Network \(TxVSN\)](#), and other TEA-approved programs to assist in the transition process.



TAC § 89.1609, Placement in Educational Programs and Courses

When a student in substitute care transfers before or during the school year, the receiving school shall initially place the student in educational programs and courses based on the student's prior enrollment in and current educational assessments from the sending school. Schools shall also ensure the continuation of a student's educational and course programs from the previous school and promote placement in academically challenging and career preparation courses.

- Educational programs include, but are not limited to, gifted and talented program services, bilingual or special language services for English learners, career and technical education, and early college high school.
- Course placement includes, but is not limited to, honors, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, vocational, technical, and career pathway courses.

Each school must ensure that a student who is in substitute care has the ability to earn the same endorsement categories, if applicable. If only one endorsement is offered, it must be the multidisciplinary endorsement.



TAC § 89.1611, Promotion of Access to Educational and Extracurricular Programs for Students Who are in Substitute Care

School staff must facilitate the process to complete and submit a University Interscholastic League (UIL) waiver of residence application form for a student who is in substitute care and plans to participate in varsity athletics or other UIL-sponsored activities.

LEAs may not impose durational residency requirements for students in foster care for any activity sponsored by the LEA.

Although the University Interscholastic League (UIL) imposes durational residence requirements on students generally, the Office of the Texas Attorney General has found that no durational residential requirement in the UIL rules may be applied to a student placed by DFPS or a court into a foster placement located in a receiving LEA.

This is true regardless of whether it is the student's first time to be placed in a foster home or the student has been moved to a new foster home. If the placement is by DFPS or a court, no durational requirement can be imposed if the reason for the student's relocation is placement in foster care.

Each LEA is encouraged to examine what services are available and how it can meet this goal. For example, if the school has a 21st Century Community Learning Center before-school or after-school program, a student in foster care may participate at no charge. Many schools have other after-school tutoring programs in which students may be encouraged to participate, such as the Communities In Schools (CIS) program that provides tutoring, mentoring, and summer programs.



Students in foster care should be afforded opportunities to participate in summer programs, credit transfers, electronic courses provided through the Texas Virtual School Network, and after-school tutoring programs at nominal or no cost.



RESOURCES: Extracurricular Programs

[21st Century Community Learning Centers](#)

[Communities In Schools of Texas](#)

[University Interscholastic League](#)



TAC § 89.1613, Promotion of Post-secondary Information

LEA staff must work with the Foster Care Liaison to ensure that student's in foster care graduate with endorsements, if applicable, and have post-secondary plans identified in their personal graduation plans, in alignment with TEC § 28.02121. Schools are required to provide services to support students in foster care who are applying for admission to post-secondary study and/or seeking sources of funding for post-secondary study.

LEAs are encouraged to provide information to students in foster care about college programs and opportunities to pursue post-secondary studies, including junior and community colleges; four-year colleges and universities; and vocational, technical, and certificate programs. Promote college access by linking students with local college programs to support their successful transition into post-secondary education.

Many specific financial resources and supports for students in foster care exist (*see Chapter 13: Transitioning from Foster Care to a Successful Adulthood & Post-Secondary Opportunities, on page 143*). LEAs should be informed of these resources, provide information, and connect students. In order to activate the waiver, the student must enroll in at-least one college course before turning 25 years old.



School personnel can assist students in foster care by facilitating enrollment in at least one dual-credit or college course while in high school, automatically qualifying students for the lifetime tuition and fee waiver. Any college course, including developmental courses and many continuing education classes, will initiate the tuition and fee waiver. Connecting students to these opportunities is a positive strategy schools can implement to support successful transitions and college and career readiness.



TAC § 89.1615, Provision of Special Education Services

Schools are required to accept a previous school's referral for special education services made for a student in substitute care.

By law, a receiving school must accept a referral for special education from a previous district to speed up the process for special education and ensure students receive proper academic supports and interventions once in their new school. The Texas Education Agency Student Attendance Accounting Handbook requires that records be transferred from one school to the next via TReX.

Records that must be transferred include assessment instrument results, records regarding special education services, and individualized education plans, if applicable. Schools should review the list of required records to transfer in order to facilitate continuity and educational stability for students in foster care. In instances where a student is already eligible for SPED, the receiving LEA must ensure that it meets the student transfer requirements of TAC § 89.1050(j). For more information on TReX and effective records transfer, see *Chapter 6: School Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Other Transition Considerations For Students In Foster Care*, on page 63; for more information on special education, see *Chapter 12: Students Eligible for or Receiving Special Education Services*, on page 131.



TAC § 89.1617, Notice to Student's Educational Decision-Maker and Caseworker

Schools must comply with TEC § 25.007(b)(10), and provide notice in writing to the educational decision-maker and caseworker of a student in substitute care regarding events that may significantly impact the education of the student.

These events include:

- requests or referrals for an evaluation under Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Section 794), or special education under Section 29.003;
- admission, review, and dismissal committee meetings;
- manifestation determination reviews required by Section 37.004(b);
- any disciplinary actions under Chapter 37 for which parental notice is required;
- citations issued for Class C misdemeanor offenses on school property or at school-sponsored activities;
- reports of restraint and seclusion required by Section 37.0021;
- use of corporal punishment as provided by Section 37.0011; and
- appointment of a surrogate parent for the child under Section 29.0151.



TIP: When receiving an Education Decision Maker Form 2085-E, make sure the form is signed and legible. A sample form is included in Appendix F. See *Chapter 9: Education Decision-Making*, on page 97.



PROMOTING HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

Helping to ensure students have their caps and gowns, senior pictures, yearbooks, and that they participate in school-related graduation activities is important! Additionally, being present at a student's high school graduation and taking the time to celebrate and congratulate their success is a meaningful way to support them. Staff should work with caregivers to ensure that students have others to celebrate with them, which may include the student's family (parents, siblings, and others).

Texas law supports high school completion for students in foster care!



LAW: If an 11th or 12th grade student in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services transfers to a different school district and the student is ineligible to graduate from the receiving district, the sending district shall award a diploma at the student's request, if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.



LAW: A student in substitute care who was previously enrolled in a course required for graduation must be allowed the opportunity, to the extent practicable, to complete the course at no cost to the student before the beginning of the next school year.

School staff should work with students to identify high school completion and credit recovery supports that help students make progress towards high school completion. Alternative mechanisms to complete coursework and recover credits may be pursued. In some cases, a student may benefit from alternative high school programs and environments with fewer students and more individualized attention. Staff should work with the student, caregivers, and the student's caseworker to determine a school setting that promotes the student's individual success and high school completion.



TIP: If applicable, remind students they can attend school and receive their high school diploma after turning 18. In accordance with Texas law, some high schools provide an opportunity for students to earn their high school diploma up until the age of 26.

For more information visit [TEA graduation requirements](#).

School staff should work with students and caregivers to determine the appropriate high school graduation plan and to ensure that students in foster care are provided with challenging, engaging coursework that will help prepare them for college, career, or the military. Beginning with the Foundation High School Program (FHSP), students should be encouraged to pursue endorsements and participate in advanced academics, career and technical education, STEM programs, or one of the Texas College and Career Readiness School Models based on the availability within the LEA.



Best Practices for Academic Monitoring to Promote High School Completion and Prevent Dropout

LEAs should utilize student data reports to assist in academic progress monitoring of students in foster care. Student identification, attendance, assessment, discipline, grades, and credits should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure on-time promotion and graduation. Student data should be used to develop an individualized academic monitoring plan that provides targeted interventions, supports, and progress-monitoring strategies.

- » Ensure all students in foster care are accurately coded with the TSDS PEIMS Foster Care Indicator.
- » Ensure all students in foster care are accurately coded with the TSDS PEIMS At-Risk Indicator.

District and campus staff should collaborate with their PEIMS coordinator and registrar to run the following reports:

- ▷ Attendance
- ▷ Grades
- ▷ Credits Earned vs. Credits Attempted
- ▷ Assessment scores
- ▷ At-Risk Indicators
- ▷ Disciplinary Alternative Education Program
- ▷ Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- ▷ Special Student Populations (e.g. Special Education, Gifted and Talented, English Learner, Military-Connected, Migrant, Homeless, Foster Care, Pregnancy Related Services, etc.)



Academic monitoring is essential to the success of students in foster care. District and campus staff should develop a data-driven system that will facilitate and drive positive student experiences and academic outcomes.

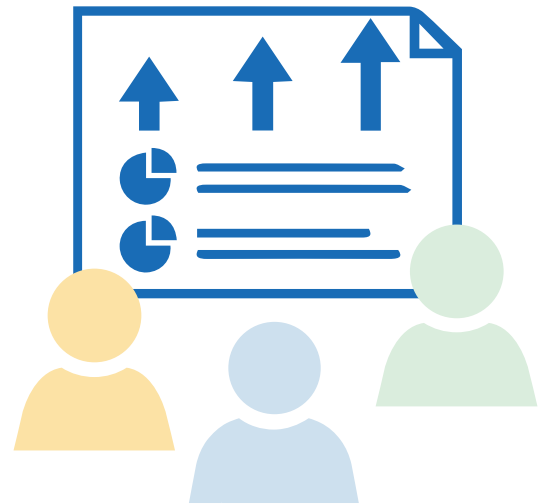
Additional strategies, tips, and resources will be provided throughout this chapter to drive an effective and positive student experience.

Review data reports throughout the year to:

- ▷ Monitor attendance and grades
- ▷ Identify or modify academic interventions and supports
- ▷ Adjust course schedules
- ▷ Develop student academic goals
- ▷ Monitor student progress and success
- ▷ Ensure students in foster care receive appropriate grades and/or credits for courses taken

Utilize data reports to:

- ▷ Ensure continuity of education programs, services, and supports
- ▷ Ensure on-time promotion and graduation
- ▷ Provide academic progress monitoring updates to foster care parents, caseworkers, caregivers, etc.
- ▷ Assist students in foster care with post-secondary planning



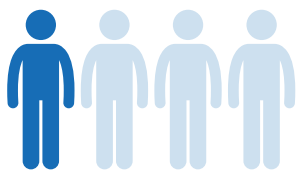
For more information on a free early warning data system tool that schools can use, visit the [Texas Comprehensive Center](#)

Research based strategies in dropout prevention are available to assist school leaders in facilitating the academic achievement of students at risk of dropping out of school. These strategies should be adapted to meet students' individual needs and applied intentionally in addressing the educational needs of students in foster care.



The U.S. Department of Education has identified seven key strategies for dropout prevention that apply to students in foster care:

In Texas **1 out of every 4 students,**



25% in foster care **dropped out of school,** compared to 5.9% of their peers in 2019.

1. Use diagnostic data and data systems to identify student needs.
2. Assign adult advocates to students who are at risk.
3. Provide academic supports and enrichment to improve academic performance.
4. Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.
5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
6. Provide rigorous and relevant instruction that better engages students in learning.
7. Provide the skills needed to graduate and serve students after they leave school.



RESOURCES: Dropout Prevention

[TEA Dropout Prevention and Recovery Resources](#)

[TEA Dropout Prevention and Recovery Policies](#)

[Response to Intervention \(RTI\) and Special Education FAQ](#)

[National Dropout Prevention Center](#) — Provides resources for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and families to increase opportunities for students identified as at-risk of dropping out to streamline the continuity of education and services necessary to successfully graduate from high school.

The center also maintains a [database of programs](#) that have been found to be effective in improving academic achievement.

Institute of Education Sciences (IES) "[Practice Guide - Dropout Prevention](#)" — Provides specific recommendations for program design, development, and implementation. A checklist is included that schools can use to design academic supports for students in foster care.

DETERMINING THE RIGHT ENDORSEMENT FOR GRADUATION

The Foundation High School Program (FHSP) is the start of a tailored educational experience. Students meet with an academic counselor to determine which endorsement options, distinguished level of achievement, and performance acknowledgements to pursue for their interests. It is important that students' interests and goals after graduation are considered when determining the endorsement for the graduation plan.

Students in foster care should be encouraged to receive endorsements and specialized training. See Chapter 13 for more information on participate in dual credit or early college programs.

Texas College and Career Readiness School Models (CCRSM) including Early College High Schools (ECHS), Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM), and Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) provide an opportunity for students to earn a Distinguished Level of Achievement for high school graduation.



TIP: It is important that the student's high-school graduation plan accurately reflects their current goals and interests. The student and person acting as a parent can request to meet with a counselor to change or update the students High School Graduation Plan.

In the event that a school move occurs for a student in high school, it is important to review and revisit this plan and make sure that the student has the necessary coursework to complete their Endorsements and Distinguished Levels of Achievement for Graduation.

The chart below provides an overview of the different high school graduation plans and compares participation percentages for students in foster care and the general state population.

Information in the chart below is found in: [Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2018-19.](#)



FOSTER CHILDREN COMPARED TO STATE POPULATION: GRADUATES BY GRADUATION PROGRAM TYPE

According to TEA PEIMS data for the graduating class of 2018-2019, significantly more students in foster care graduated with the Foundations High School Plan without General Endorsements (FHSP) compared to the average student (39.2% compared to 12.3%). Significantly fewer students in foster care graduated with the Distinguished Level of Achievement than the average student population (55.4% compared to 83.5%). These graduation outcomes clearly articulate an achievement gap that exists between students in foster care and the average students in Texas. School staff can close these gaps by ensuring that students in foster care are more consistently placed on the Foundation High School Program with general endorsements and are provided the same opportunities to graduate with distinguished levels of achievement as their peers.



The student's parent/guardian must sign off on the student's high-school plan in the 9th grade. For students in foster care this may be the student's caregiver, caseworker, or education decision-maker.

Student type	Foundations High School Plan without General Endorsements (FHSP) (22 credits)	Foundations High School Plan with General Endorsements (FHSP) (26 Credits)	Distinguished Level of Achievement (DLA) (26 Credits)
Foster Care	39.2	5.4	55.4
State Population	12.3	4.2	83.5



TIP: It is always important to involve youth in planning and discussion about their long-term goals and future aspirations when determining their high school graduation program.



RESOURCES: High School Graduation

[Foundation High School Program requirements.](#)

[The Graduation Toolkit](#) is available in English and Spanish.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) AND STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE:

Career and technical education (CTE) generally includes instruction in the academic, technical, and employability skills and knowledge required to enter and succeed in specific occupations. At the secondary level, CTE introduces students to career fields and helps them begin to build marketable skills and, in some cases, earn credentials. At the post-secondary level, CTE provides an entry point for new or returning students to learn specific knowledge and specialized skills in a particular occupational field. At both levels, CTE often includes work-based learning experiences.

Students in foster care can benefit greatly from hands-on, work- and skill-based learning environments. Students who participate in CTE have higher education outcomes in comparison to their peers not participating in CTE. Students in foster care are a priority student group for Perkins 5 and CTE. Consider opportunities to promote CTE and link students in foster care to available programs in your LEA and community.

For more information visit [Texas CTE](#)



THE IMPACT OF TESTING ON HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS (STAAR) AND END OF COURSE (EOC)

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and End of Course (EOC) exams measure the extent to which students have learned and are able to apply the knowledge and skills defined in the TEKS. The EOCs are administered for Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History, which are required for high school graduation. The STAAR Algebra II and English III post-secondary readiness assessments are optional assessments for districts; however, if the district chooses to administer either or both assessments, students enrolled must take the exam. It is critical for LEAs to communicate with students and their caregivers about STAAR, the five end-of-course assessments, and the relationship of the state assessment program to high school graduation.¹⁴⁸

The TEA STAAR Resources website keeps current information and resources for STAAR that are helpful to school officials:

The 87th Texas Legislature established Accelerated Learning Committees for students who did not pass the STAAR test in reading or math (grades 3,5, and 8) (HB 4545). The committee is responsible for developing an individualized plan for accelerated instruction for the student. Accelerated instruction is the delivery of supplemental instruction (e.g. tutoring) before or after school, or embedded in the school day. For more information visit [TEA HB 4545 Implementation Overview](#).



- The STAAR program includes assessments that address students receiving special education services and English Learners (ELs) in grades 3-5 in reading, writing, mathematics, and science who meet particular participation requirements.
- Assessments for Students Receiving Special Education Services: STAAR Alternate 2
- Assessments for English Learners: STAAR Spanish Grades 3-5



TIP: It is important to provide information to child welfare partners about standardized testing dates and ensure students participate in testing, even if a school move occurs near testing dates.



INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION COMMITTEE:

If the student has not passed the minimum required EOC examinations, the student may be eligible to participate in an Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) to evaluate and determine if they are eligible to graduate.” This change is necessary as it is still not guaranteed.

A student receiving special education services is not subject to the individual graduation committee requirements in the TEC § 28.0258, or the provisions of this section.

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND MILITARY READINESS EXAMS

Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)

TSIA determines a student’s readiness for college-level coursework in the general areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. With the goal for high school completion and post-secondary education, school staff should encourage students to complete the TSIA early in their high school careers, especially on campuses with early college programs or dual credit options. For more information, visit the [TEA TSIA Webpage](#).

PSAT, SAT, or ACT

In order to expand the options of students in foster care for postsecondary education, liaisons should be aware of the district dates for school day administration of the PSAT, SAT, or ACT tests.

If a student in foster care missed the school day administration, there are fee waivers with these exams that allow the student to take the exam at other sites and could possibly waive college application fees depending on the college or university.

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)

As a part of the ASVAB Career Exploration Program, each school district may offer the ASVAB or an alternative test. To find more information on the ASVAB and resources visit, the [TEA ASVAB Webpage](#).

DETERMINING WHEN A HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM (HSEP) IS APPROPRIATE

In the event the student has not shown appropriate educational progress towards graduation, students have the opportunity to receive their [Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency](#) by taking the GED or HiSET exam. Below are resources to learn more about the GED and HiSET and determine if this is an appropriate next step for a student (*see Chapter 13, Transitioning from Foster Care to a Successful Adulthood & Post-Secondary Education Opportunities, on page 142*).

Eligibility: A resident of the state who has not graduated from an accredited high school is eligible to take the high school equivalency test per TEC § 7.111 in accordance with rules promulgated by the State Board of Education.

The HSEP prepares eligible students to pass the high school equivalency exams instead of earning a high school diploma.

[Here are the steps](#) to help prepare individuals to take their equivalency exam.