



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
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March 17, 2011

I am pleased to release the attached report regarding strategies to improve education outcomes of adolescents in foster care. Children's Administration (CA) in partnership with the Legislature, private sector providers and other state agencies has, since 2003 increased the focus on improving educational success of children in care. This work was show cased at the recent National Governor's Association Education Learning Lab convening held in Washington State in November 2010.

While there is a solid foundation and consistent progress, CA continues to recognize a need to build on the momentum with a focus on making additional gains in the educational success of children and foster youth in care. In light of CA's commitment, I requested the College Success Foundation convene a workgroup of representatives from state agencies, the legislature, and non-profit organizations to discuss, examine and make recommendations to continue to support the educational success of youth and alumni of care. I specifically asked the group to focus on building on the strengths and gains Children's Administration (CA) has implemented in cooperation and partnership with other agencies in the public and private sector.

As a result of this work a set of policy and practice recommendations were developed and presented to CA; highlights of the full report are included in the executive summary and the full report begins on page 12. As a response to these recommendations a timeline has been developed for implementation of prioritized strategies after discussion and review with youth, CA management, Education Leads and the Attorney General's office. Strategies that are cost neutral and strengthen policy and practice were chosen as a priority.

I would like to thank our partners for their help in this effort to date; and we look forward to a continued partnership to address education outcomes of children in our care. If you have additional questions or comments about the enclosed Education Framework please contact Juliette Knight (360) 902-8474; email juliette.knight@dshs.wa.gov; or Rick Butt (206) 923-4891; email rick.butt@dshs.w.gov.

Sincerely,

Denise Revels Robinson
Assistant Secretary
Children's Administration

AN EDUCATION SUCCESS STRATEGY FOR WASHINGTON STATE'S YOUTH IN CARE AND ALUMNI

March 2011

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Executive Summary

An Education Success Strategy for Washington State's Youth in Care and Alumni March 2011

Background

Washington State is considered a national leader in terms of attention to and action regarding education for youth in care. Since 2003 the state has put into place a number of important policies and procedures designed to improve education outcomes. Evidence from research shows educational outcomes are on the uprise for youth in the foster care system. However, continued efforts to strengthen this work are recognized as a need within Washington State's child welfare system.

In July 2010, Denise Revels Robinson Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration requested the College Success Foundation form a workgroup to draft recommendations for a state education framework for youth and alumni of care for consideration. The workgroup consisted of representatives from state agencies and non-profit organizations that each bring specific expertise in helping improve education outcomes for youth in foster care.

The workgroup determined key barriers to education success, developed milestones that would mark academic progress, and made recommendations that can positively impact the educational outcomes of youth in care.

The workgroup was encouraged to look broadly and also identify strategies about ways to support CA caseworkers internally and address what their needs are to better support the education success of children and youth on their case loads. Previous collaborations such as the Foster Care to College Partnership, the 2009 Blueprint Workgroup, and current work such as the Education Advocacy Program and lessons learned from the different agencies providing educational services offered valuable information in this work.

Children's Administration (CA) has focused on improving the educational success of children in foster care since 2003. With the assistance of key pieces of legislation and private-public partnerships, Children's Administration has made a consistent effort to increase the educational success of children in their care.

Accomplishments include the development and implementation of:

- Education policy which addresses placement and school stability
- Social worker Practice Guide to Education, Education Advocacy Guide for Caregivers and Helping Foster Children Achieve Educational Stability and Success: Field Guide for Information Sharing
- A standard order for the Courts to be used in Shelter Care which authorizes the release of educational records
- Ongoing educational advocacy training for social workers and caregivers
- The development of a school district agreement template which addresses placement stability, transportation the transfer of records and information sharing as related to children in out of home care; as of January 2011 there are 195 signed agreements with local school districts
- Contracted for and expanded educational advocacy services
- Data share agreements between the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Institute of Public Policy, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board

- Developed educational outcome reports that address graduation rates, WASL scores, educational advocacy
- Foster Care to College Partnership; this three year mainly privately funded initiative, , focused on increasing high school completion and college enrollment for youth and alumni of care. The FCTC partnership programs included:
 - Mentoring,
 - College preparation seminars for youth and caregivers
 - Education summits which trained and supported local convening's between school district personnel, higher education staff, caregivers and Children's Administration staff Training; and
 - Helped develop an adolescent website
- Developed FamLink pages to capture documentation on educational information
- Launched the Passport for Foster Youth Promise pilot that encourages youth to pursue, persist, enroll in and complete post-secondary programs.

Current Initiatives:

- Development of a Education Plan which social workers are required to review every six months and attach to the ISSP and submit to the court for each school-age child and youth in care
- Creating a specialized "Adolescent track" for future training of social workers
- Continuing to focus on entering school district agreements with school districts that have high numbers of foster children. As of January 2011, CA has completed 75 of the 91 identified high priority school placement agreement districts.

In the preliminary findings of the recent Federal Child and Family Review (CFSR), under Well-Being Outcome 2: "*Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.*" Children's Administration received one of the highest scores for this area. The CFRS indicated that there are multiple strengths in Washington State such as: educational advocates, parents and foster parents advocating for services, ongoing assessment of needs and provision of services.

In November 2010, Washington State was the host of the National Governor's Association Learning Lab regarding the educational success of youth in care. Washington was chosen because of its national leadership. Seven states participated in a three day workshop. Each state brought a team of four or five critical state level educators and child welfare staff to learn from Washington's innovative partnerships, data sharing agreements and programs that support educational success.

While there is a solid foundation and consistent progress, Children's Administration continues to build on the momentum with a focus on making additional gains in the educational success of children and youth in foster care. In light of CA's commitment, over the summer and early fall of 2010 a workgroup of representatives from state agencies, the legislature, and non-profit organizations came together to discuss, examine and make recommendations to continue to support the educational success of youth and alumni of care. Denise Revels Robinson, Assistant Secretary, specifically asked the group to focus on building on the strengths and gains Children's Administration (CA) has implemented in cooperation and partnership with other agencies in the public and private sector.

As a result of this work a set of policy and practice recommendations were developed and presented to CA; highlights of the full report are included in this summary, the full report begins on page 12. As a response to these recommendations a timeline has been developed for implementation after discussion and review with youth, CA management, Education Leads and

the Attorney General's office. Strategies that are cost neutral and strengthen policy and practice were chosen as a priority.

Our education partners both at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and local school districts are critical in the full success of a rich educational experience. CA recognizes this is a larger systemic issue and partnership with the public and private sector is critical in our ability to address education outcomes for youth and alumni of care.

Workgroup Recommendations for Children’s Administration

Recommendations are structured around the three strategic areas of **stability, educational quality** and **interagency collaboration, coordination and communication**.

Stability:

| Securing the most Appropriate and Best Possible Educational Placement |
|--|
| At the time of placing the youth, prioritize placing in the school of origin whenever possible. |
| Direct Placement Coordinators to consider education placement, and clearly outline this priority in the new foster parent recruitment contracts. |
| Engage biological parent(s). Clearly outline their role in their child’s education and engage them in decision making. |
| Utilize school buildings for shared planning meetings. |
| All permanency planning and solution-based casework will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider education stability and success in all decisions, particularly permanency and transition planning meetings • include knowledgeable community partners who can provide information on educational resource |
| Create a standardized form to be part of the shelter care order which outlines education, health, and travel responsibilities assigned to the named caregiver that will be sent to the school upon placement. This form will also contain detailed information regarding the roles and rights of the foster parent and social worker, which will help educate and inform the school. |
| Develop educational stability training, based on the Washington State Judicial Checklist and the ABA Judicial Checklist, for Juvenile and Dependency Courts so that judges have the tools and information they need to address education comprehensively at each meeting. |
| Convene stakeholders to have a high level discussion regarding “best interest decision making.” Clarify and outline the process for “best interest” decision making between social worker, school, caregiver, biological parent, and any other identified adult regarding school placement decisions. (McKinney Vento, IDEA, etc.) |
| Provide school transportation for all youth who come into care to enable same school continuity. |

| Securing the most Appropriate and Best Possible Educational Placement |
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| Strengthen the process for education records request and timely transfer of education information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a standard statewide CA/CHET cover letter that outlines the RCW pertaining to records sharing timelines and responsibilities • Develop quality assurance process to alert the Attorney General’s office (AG) of non-compliance |
| Develop quality assurance process for social workers to document educational records into Famlink. |
| Develop quality assurance process for caregivers to receive educational records upon a youth’s placement. |

Quality Education:

| Appropriate Classification of Learning Needs |
|--|
| Develop policy and procedure to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify who is acting as the “parent”, consistent with IDEA law, on behalf of the youth• inform legal and education parties of the designated “parent”, along with information regarding the “parent’s” rights and responsibilities |
| Low Rates of Out of Class Time |
| Develop tracking and accountability measures to ensure that youth’s appointments and court appearances are scheduled to minimize their impact on the youth’s education, and youth are not penalized for school time or work missed because of court or child welfare case-related activities. |
| Develop explicit internal policies and procedures regarding when and how social workers and foster parents need to intervene when education issues such as school truancy, discipline and exclusion arise. |
| Develop internal “red flag” indicators to help identify youth with potential academic and/or behavioral problems that social workers and caregivers can watch for, along with appropriate interventions. |
| Quality Education Services |
| Provide training at the school building level to ensure there is staff proficient in working with highly vulnerable youth who have experienced trauma, as well as policy and procedures related to truancy, behavioral issues, etc., This person would be part of the designated advocate for youth at any proceedings regarding the youth’s offense(s). This is under Building Bridges purview. Reinvigorating Student Intervention Teams (SIT) in school buildings attention to youth in care is another possible structure to use with social workers sitting on that team in the most high need districts. (Region 6 used to do this.) |
| Education planning for foster youth should involve them and incorporate practices that are predictors of education success such as completion of high school including school placement stability, plans for postsecondary education and career options, employment experiences, and positive relationships with adult advocates. |
| Expand Education Lead positions to be full-time and focused on building strong relationships with schools and districts to facilitate improved educational outcomes for youth in care. |
| Develop individual student success indicators (i.e., education plans, grade point average, school attendance, transcript) to identify early risk signs. |
| Collaborate with individual schools to create, review and revise education plan for every student in foster care, and incorporate it into Famlink. |
| Provide youth with the financial resources needed to participate in the full school experience. For example, funds for class and graduation photos, yearbooks, club/sport/event fees, etc. |
| Smooth Post- Care Education Transitions |
| Provide all youth in care with a safe and viable transition plan for exiting care. |
| Develop a standardized youth-centered framework for the shared planning meetings focused on developing a transitional plan. |
| Update the <i>Social Worker Guide for Youth Transitioning from Care</i> to include tips and tools for social workers to be knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• high school graduation requirements |

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • college eligibility requirements • the multiple pathways and options to post-secondary success |
| Provide six months of “aftercare” support services to youth upon leaving care. |
| Update www.independence.wa.gov to include available supplemental academic support and college preparation programs. |
| Develop and implement a series of post-secondary readiness, access, and success workshops for all youth in care through middle and high school. |
| Coordinate the various plans (i.e. High School and Beyond, life skills, etc.) into the 17.5 shared staffing meeting. |

Interagency Collaboration, Coordination and Communication:

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| Advocates for Youth |
| Provide cross-training and support (on an ongoing basis) to child welfare, education, and legal professionals regarding information sharing policy and procedure. |
| Develop policy and/or procedure which require the identification of an “education advocate” for youth in care who will be responsible for overseeing services, support and issues related to education throughout the youth’s time in care. |

Workgroup Highlights

Findings

Over-arching principles and perspectives for strategy

The workgroup believes that certain over-arching principles and perspectives should be incorporated into every aspect of a state education framework for youth in state care, including field operations. These are:

Continuous improvement and progress: Educational success means youth in care are making continuous progress in academics and life skill accumulation over the course of their time in middle, secondary and postsecondary schools. The incorporation of educational milestones into strategy by the agencies, institutions and organizations in the youth in care system will reflect this notion of ongoing progress along the education continuum.

Keeping track: Careful tracking of the educational progress of youth in care and alumni must be considered a priority infused in all decisions and actions taken by authorities. This principle underscores the need to share information and training across systems.

Child/youth voice: The “voice” (perspective, views, and opinions) of youth in care and alumni should be taken into account as much as possible as determinations are made about their educational activities and pathways.

Professional culture: All child welfare professionals should be cognizant of the youth’s educational needs and make their best efforts to achieve educational stability and continuity. Moreover, acknowledging that birth parents have a legal right to be involved in their child’s education, every effort should be made by child welfare professionals to engage them in decisions regarding their child’s education as frequently as possible.

Accountability: Determining who is accountable for appropriate educational pathways and outcomes for youth in care will improve the effectiveness of programs and services. Pinpointing accountability must be part of all decisions and actions taken by authorities.

Educational milestones for youth in care

The workgroup’s view was that educational milestones for youth in care and alumni of care mirror the expectations about academic progress and success that Washington State holds for all its children. Therefore, grades seven through postsecondary milestones mirror state standards as well as national policy recommendations for college planning and preparedness , and recent Washington State-based research around indicators of college success. The workgroup was also cognizant of the need to consider academic progress in the context of the adverse circumstances and backgrounds children and youth coming into care have experienced; and the child or youth’s own age appropriate academic preparedness and performance.

Educational Milestones

- ⊙ Students have high quality and consistent learning experiences concerning college and career planning in middle school that provide them with:
 - familiarity with high school graduation and college eligibility requirements, and
 - awareness of the multiple pathways and options available to them in terms of instructional settings and learning experiences in high school and following graduation.

- ⊙ Students are high school ready in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the end of Grade eight as measured by state assessments and if not, are enrolled in an appropriate summer school program prior to the start of high school.
- ⊙ Students complete Grade nine with passing grades and full credit in core academic courses.
- ⊙ Students have reviewed and revised their High School and Beyond Plan during each year of secondary school.
- ⊙ Students have met state standards in reading, writing, math and science on grade ten state assessments.
- ⊙ Students have received high quality and consistent coaching and learning experiences throughout high school concerning the specific steps required for college and career entry, including college selection, admissions, and financial aid. Quality experiences can include:
 - Students being given the opportunity to visit one or more college or university campuses and meet peers, near peers and other role models who have successfully completed higher education during their high school years.
 - Students being given the opportunity to serve as interns in business or organizations during their high school years.

- ⊙ Students have met the state's Student Learning Goals by Grade 12 including:
 - Reading with comprehension, writing with skill and communicating effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
 - Knowing and applying core concepts and principles of mathematics, social, physical, and life sciences, civics and history, geography, arts, and health and fitness;
 - Thinking analytically, logically, and creatively, and integrating experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems;
 - Understanding the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.

- ⊙ Students complete a preliminary transition plan in tenth grade in association with their High School and Beyond Plan, and again during the 90 day period before their emancipation birthday (ages 18, 19, 20 or 21) that includes specific education and vocational plans.
- ⊙ Students planning to enter college have completed developmental courses and hold basic college level skills as indicated by college placement test results.
- ⊙ Students enrolled in community or technical colleges accumulate the equivalent of at least 15 credits during their first two quarters of enrollment and 30 credits during the first year of enrollment.
- ⊙ Students complete a postsecondary certificate or degree in a timely fashion.

Strategic focus areas

The workgroup reviewed the literature and found barriers to improving educational outcomes are highlighted in both national and state reports and studies. These same themes were present in workgroup members' own experiences as policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders in Washington State. These issues and concerns clustered into three strategic focus areas:

- **Stability in educational placement:** The goal is to increase stable student educational placement and enrollment in the face of mobility in the foster care system. Stability has two principle elements: securing and maintaining the best possible school placement for a student and when students must change placements making sure that individual student records follow a student's movements between schools and school systems.
- **Delivery of a quality educational experience:** The goal is to secure for youth in care an effective, responsive and appropriate educational experience from middle school through postsecondary certificate or degree. The components include appropriate classification of student learning needs; minimizing out of class time and providing access to all aspects of the school experience; making academic progress a central precept of policy and practice throughout the education continuum; persistently providing supports for college readiness and access; ensuring smooth post-care education transitions; and the use of research-based approaches to ensure effective academic delivery and supports.
- **Interagency collaboration, coordination and communication:** The goal builds on Washington State's youth in care and alumni community's existing cooperative spirit, and advocates for more effective collaboration, coordination and communication between and among all the decision makers in the youth in care community. Data and information exchange, training and organizing adult professionals as advocates for educational outcomes are important strategies for improving this issue.

Recommendations for action

The workgroup examined each of the three strategic focus areas in detail and structured recommendations specific to CA policy and operations (a timeline for these recommendations is at the end of the report). As well as recommendations geared toward other state policy decision makers and non-governmental organizations, f our themes run through virtually all of the recommendations: ***prioritize, clarify, train and implement thoughtfully.***

- ***Prioritize*** refers to the need to consistently alert and inform the youth in care and alumni community from top state leadership down to the classroom on both the importance of education as a successful outcome for youth and alumni of care and ways to achieve that objective.
- ***Clarify*** concerns establishing an up-to-date, common knowledge base for the youth and alumni of care community about the often intricate and nuanced federal regulations, legislative charges and state policies dealing with education. Issuing guidelines can eliminate differing interpretations at the agency level but also on the ground among social workers, school districts and school buildings. Clarify also refers to determining ownership and accountability for progress on educational goals for youth and alumni of care among the involved agencies, institutions and organizations.
- ***Train*** points to the importance of continuously training and upgrading the common knowledge base by all members of the youth and alumni of care community. Policies, legal issues and best practices are complex and evolving so active and ongoing training with appropriate material and tools needs to be put in place.

- **Implement thoughtfully.** Even with prioritization, clarification and a commonly held knowledge base, an education strategy for youth in care can only work if professionals in the field act thoughtfully as programs and policies are implemented; particularly when making determinations about a youth's educational well being. The active use of tools like checklists and guidebooks will certainly assist in this regard.

The workgroup believes that strategy development is an evolving process, and that this report's conclusions and recommendations are not the final word on how Washington State can improve the educational success of youth in care. A number of steps will need to be taken by all of the involved agencies, institutions and organizations to improve the educational outcomes of youth in care and alumni. This report lays out recommendations about how Washington State can continue this journey

- **Cultural Re-emphasis.** Education should be a priority in placement decisions, permanency planning, and case planning; and a concurrent practice in addressing the safety needs of the youth and alumni in care community.
- **Develop indicators/measures.** The development of measures and indicators of progress in policy and practice is a key next step in the development of an education strategy because it will assure that action can be **tied back to outcomes**, allowing for better tracking and accountability for the progress.
- **Engage social workers.** Social workers should be given the opportunity to react to this report so that they can provide recommendations for concrete changes in field operations stemming from the report's findings and recommendations.
- **Engage youth in care and alumni supporters more broadly.** The report should be distributed to teams across the state composed of CA social workers who work primarily with adolescents, ILP/Set Up contractors, decision makers, caregivers for adolescents, youth and other community collaborators from the regions. This will be an important means of determining what might be missing from the existing strategic framework.
- **Engage state leadership.** CA and its partners should convene a series of summits with policy makers, experts and thought leaders to discuss and debate Washington State's strategy with the goal of establishing specific commitments to action by the members of the youth in care and alumni community and to design a system of accountability to track those commitments.
- **Adopt promising policies and practices.** The workgroup encourages CA continue to review (and revise if needed) existing policies and adopt any promising practices that align with existing work around improving educational outcomes

Next Steps

The following next steps are a response from CA regarding the workgroup recommendations. CA remains committed to improving the education outcomes of youth in care, and building on momentum already underway with education agencies at the state and local level and our partners in the non-profit community.

Efforts to move this work forward and to continue raising awareness amongst our partners who share responsibility for this work include presenting this information to the following groups:

- Commission for Children in Foster Care

- Transformation Design Committee
- Superior Court Judges Judicial Committee
- DSHS Executive Leadership Team
- Children's Administration Extended Management Team
- 1624 Foster Parent Committee

Performance Based Contract lead agencies will also be convened by CA leadership on a regular basis and discussions about the strategies to help improve education outcomes of youth in care will be a regular focus.

CA is also committed to moving the efforts of this workgroup forward in broader partnering community initiatives underway within DSHS. This includes exploring partnership possibilities with low performing education school districts and local schools on ways we can work differently with our multi-system involved families.

An Education Success Strategy for Washington State's Youth in Care and Alumni Full Report

Introduction

Securing successful educational outcomes for youth in care and alumni has been, and continues to be, a central goal in Washington State. A deep sense of responsibility and concern about this issue has led to thoughtful action; from gubernatorial support over multiple administrations, to legislative attention, to enhanced focus at the direct service level. In July 2010, Denise Revels Robinson Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration requested the College Success Foundation form a workgroup to draft recommendations for a state education framework for youth and alumni of care for consideration.

The framework provides a set of recommended priorities and actions that would move the state forward in achieving the goal of educational success. The framework and recommendations focus on youth in care from middle school through grade 12 and alumni of care. Washington State has already put into place a number of important policies and procedures to improve educational success for these youth. The purpose of a state framework is to assure existing elements are well implemented, optimizing educational outcomes for youth in care, and to identify **possible** additional policies, procedures and practices that could positively impact educational outcomes. This report summarizes the discussions, conclusions and recommendations of the workgroup.

Washington is a national leader for directly addressing the educational success of youth and alumni of care. Political leadership and interagency collaboration between the public and private sector since 2003 has led to productive communication, planning, and implementation of multi-pronged efforts to increase the educational success of youth in care.

It is important to celebrate Washington's success; however there remains much to be done to continue to build on the momentum of success. Foster children and youth continue to face significant educational challenges. Youth in care have higher rates of disciplinary action, grade retention and school mobility compared to the general population. Recent research in 2008 indicates that, youth in care met standards for academic achievement at rates between 15 and 30 percentage points lower than other students (Washington State Institute of Public Policy WSIPP, April 2010). High school graduation rates are much lower than the state average (44% compared to 75% in the general population), and the high school dropout rate for youth in care is more than twice that of the general population (12% compared to 5% in the general population). Reinforcing the importance of stability in home and school placement, data shows when youth in care are in a permanent placement their educational success rates increase and their graduation rates rise (WSIPP, April 2010). The same research also indicates that youth in care from 9th grade through graduation experience a protective factor by being in the foster care environment. Children and youth who achieve permanent plans graduate at almost the same rate as the general high school population. Additionally, youth in care become undistinguishable from the general population when applying GED rates.

College enrollment and persistence outcomes are equally poor. In comparison to the 42% of high school completers in Washington State that attended college within a year of high school graduation, only 17-18% of youth in care attended college. Moreover 35% of the college students in the general population re-enrolled for a continued second year of college, while only 10-12% of youth in care did (WSIPP December 2009).

The workgroup believes the issues and potential solutions to these issues are complex and interconnected. The supports and interventions that students need vary depending on where a student is on the education pipeline and the circumstances of their safety, permanency, and well being. The spirit and philosophy of this report is that the best remedies are holistic – a system and culture of attention, support and services to promote educational success will enable students to thrive and achieve academically.

However in order to provide strategic priorities and promising policy and practices for progress towards the goal of educational success for youth in care and alumni, issues and solutions must be separated out somewhat artificially for the purpose of highlighting key ideas. The workgroup also acknowledged the need to leverage and strengthen work already in place and discussed recommendations to help embed an education success framework across systems for the youth in care community.

The workgroup determined that the population addressed by this framework is youth currently and formerly in state care enrolled in middle school through a postsecondary degree or certificate. With attention to Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) education standards, the workgroup developed a set of educational milestones that chart a student's educational progress over this period, as well as a set of over-arching principles and perspectives that should inform all aspects of an education strategy for youth in care. The first sections of this report outline the over-arching principles and perspectives (Section 1) and the educational milestones (Section 2) that indicate educational progress and success.

At the core of the workgroup's thinking were three main strategic focus areas from which to build an education framework and action agenda: stability in school placement, successful educational experiences and interagency collaboration, coordination and communication. In each section the workgroup researched and analyzed promising policy/practice and aligned these by federal and state statutes and policies. They then composed a series of recommendations for action. The three main strategic focus areas make up Section 3 of this report. Finally, the workgroup's suggestions for new steps for strategy development and CA's response are in Section 4.

Section 1: Over-Arching Principles and Perspectives

The workgroup believes that there are certain over-arching principles and perspectives that should be incorporated into every aspect of a state education success framework for youth in state care. These are:

Continuous improvement and progress: Educational success means youth in care and alumni are making continuous progress in academics and life skill accumulation over the course of their time in middle, secondary and postsecondary schools. The establishment of educational milestones should reflect this notion of ongoing progress from middle school through postsecondary completion.

Keeping track: Careful tracking of the educational progress of youth in care must be considered a priority infused in all decisions and actions taken by authorities. This principle underscores the need to share information and training across systems.

Child/youth voice: The "voice" (perspective, views, and opinions) of youth in care should be taken into account particularly when determinations are made about their educational activities and pathways. Youth "voice" also lends itself to Positive Youth Development and encourages self-engagement of the child or youth to invest in their education potential.

Professional culture: All child welfare professionals should be cognizant of the youth's educational needs and make their best efforts to achieve educational stability and continuity. Moreover, acknowledging that birth parents have a legal right to be involved in their child's education, child welfare professionals should engage them in decisions regarding their child's education as frequently as possible.

Accountability: Determining who holds accountability among the agencies, institutions and organizations in the foster care system over appropriate educational pathways and outcomes for youth in care and alumni will facilitate the effectiveness of programs and services.

Interagency collaboration, coordination and communication: Washington State already benefits from a tremendous amount of cooperation, collaboration and coordination among stakeholders. The continuation of this work is fundamental to ensuring the educational stability and success of Washington State's youth in care and alumni. The need for this is so acute that the workgroup identified interagency efforts as both an over-arching principle of an effective education strategy, as well as a strategic focus area.

Section 2: Educational Milestones

In consideration of student success along education pathways from middle school to completion of a postsecondary certificate or degree, appropriate academic progress throughout each year of school is probably the most significant and persistent indicator of student progress. Youth need to have supports to prevent school dropout, truancy and disciplinary actions, and should have an adult in their lives that is invested in their education and who can advocate on their behalf.

Detailed checklists have been developed that students, social service professionals, school counselors, teachers and family members/care givers can consult to be able to track recommended academic promising policy and practices as well as the informational and logistical steps required to navigate educational pathways during grades 7-12.

A middle school to college checklist for youth in care is being developed for Washington State by collaborating organizations including the College Success Foundation, Children's Administration, Team Child and Treehouse. (To see a completed checklist see California College Pathways <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/pdfs/CCP%20Educational%20Planning%20Guide.pdf>)

Additionally, already available are checklists based on the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEARUP) which guide a youth on the steps to prepare a student for college. These checklists are currently posted on CA's youth website: www.independence.wa.gov and is available for all foster youth and alumni regardless of their background.

Alongside annual academic outcomes and the specific steps suggested by the checklists are well recognized milestones that mark student outcomes and their progress along the education pathway. The expectations and markers of academic progress should be the same for youth in care and alumni as they are for any child or youth in Washington State. We believe the following milestones, which are aligned to OSPI and national indicators of college readiness and success, are key to charting a student's progress and should undergird a state education strategy for youth in care.

Educational Milestones

- ⊙ Students have high quality and consistent learning experiences concerning college and career planning in middle school that provide them with:
 - familiarity with high school graduation and college eligibility requirements, and
 - awareness of the multiple pathways and options available to them in terms of instructional settings and learning experiences in high school and following graduation.
- ⊙ Students are high school ready in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the end of Grade 8 as measured by state assessments and if not, are enrolled in an appropriate summer school program prior to the start of high school.
- ⊙ Students complete Grade 9 with passing grades and full credit in core academic courses.
- ⊙ Students have reviewed and revised their High School and Beyond Plan during each year of secondary school.
- ⊙ Students have met state standards in reading, writing, math and science on Grade 10 state assessments.
- ⊙ Students have received high quality and consistent coaching and learning experiences throughout high school concerning the specific steps required for college and career entry, including college selection, admissions, and financial aid. Quality experiences can include:
 - Students being given the opportunity to visit one or more college or university campuses and meet peers, near peers and other role models who have successfully completed higher education during their high school years.
 - Students being given the opportunity to serve as interns in business or organizations during their high school years.
- ⊙ Students have met the state's Student Learning Goals by Grade 12 including:
 - Reading with comprehension, writing with skill and communicating effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
 - Knowing and applying core concepts and principles of mathematics, social, physical, and life sciences, civics and history, geography, arts, and health and fitness;
 - Thinking analytically, logically, and creatively, and integrating experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems;
 - Understanding the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.
- ⊙ Students complete a preliminary transition plan in 10th grade in association with their High School and Beyond Plan, and again during the 90 day period before their emancipation birthday (ages 18, 19, 20 or 21) that includes specific education and vocational plans.
- ⊙ Students planning to enter college have completed developmental courses and hold basic college level skills as indicated by college placement test results.
- ⊙ Students enrolled in community or technical colleges accumulate the equivalent of at least 15 credits during their first two quarters of enrollment and 30 credits during the first year of enrollment.
- ⊙ Students complete a postsecondary certificate or degree in a timely fashion.

Section 3: Strategic Focus Areas

A number of studies have been undertaken in recent years that identify the barriers to educational progress for youth in state care. [See for example, Blueprint for Change, 2008; Solving the Data Puzzle, 2008; A Roadmap for Learning, 2004].

The workgroup found from reviewing the literature that a set of common issues and concerns linked to poor educational outcomes are highlighted in both national and state level contexts. These same themes were present in workgroup members' own experiences as policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders in Washington State. These issues and concerns clustered into three strategic focus areas: stability in educational placement, the delivery of a quality educational experience and interagency collaboration, coordination and communication. The workgroup examined each of these areas in detail and structured recommendations for action around them.

1. Stability in Educational Placement

Goal: Stable student educational placement and enrollment in the face of the mobility in the foster care system

Research indicates most youth in out of home care experience multiple placements and consequently are often forced to change schools (Blueprint for Change, 2008.) Frequent school moves negatively impact students' educational progress. Schools may be the one place where youth in care experience consistency and continuity as well as on-going relationships with teachers and peers that can provide the needed social and emotional support that will help them stay in school. Therefore every effort must be made to keep youth in care in their same school whenever possible. Stability has two principle elements: securing and maintaining the best possible school placement for a student and when students must change placements making sure that individual student records follow a student's movements between schools and school systems.

Securing the most appropriate and best possible educational placement

Ensuring stability in educational placement requires making school stability a priority in placement decisions as well as ensuring proximate living options and transportation that support attendance. Providing youth in care with the ability to remain in the same school as well as the necessary support and information to contribute to decisions about placement is also necessary. Should issues of safety or distance from domicile make a school move necessary, national policy experts suggest that if possible those transitions should take place at logical breaks in the school year such as the end of the marking period, semester or school year, (Admittedly, issues of safety are paramount and may make delays in moving students impossible.) The federal 2008 Fostering Connections Act emphasizes education stability for youth in care urging the inclusion of educational stability in a child's case plan, enabling transportation cost coverage, reporting on full time student status and secondary school completion.

Washington State has statute which addresses stability and school continuity and enrollment. DSHS is required to work with school districts to develop protocols to maximize educational continuity for youth in care, and mandated to establish an oversight committee to develop and implement practices that will support continuity. As noted in 2007's Social Workers Practice Guide to Education, enrollment decisions must be made in consideration of: the student's academic, social and emotional needs; safety or other risk factors; schedule/credit concerns for high school students; therapeutic services/relationships; previous mobility of student as well as potential plans for reunification; travel distance and length of bus ride given child's age/developmental level; ability for continued participation in before and after school activities;

and input from the student if age appropriate. When school moves occur, youth must be enrolled into their new school placement within 72 hours. CA has very comprehensive policies and procedures concerning school enrollment: social workers are charged with providing information to the new school to facilitate enrollment, including identification, health and educational records that may be delayed or missing from the originating school.

Educational records follow students' school placement

When school moves cannot be avoided or are in the best interests of a child, important records and information about the students' prior educational record must promptly follow the youth in care to the new school or delays in enrollment or loss of credit for courses completed might result. Remedies include ensuring that youth in care can be enrolled by a social worker or foster parent and that enrollment and services can begin even if there are delays in the transfer of required records. Records that are complete and up to date facilitate transition as do agreements on how to treat credit and partial academic credits accumulated by youth in care so that their academic progress is not impeded. The 2008 federal Fostering Connections Act includes language tasking state welfare and educational agencies with ensuring immediate enrollment in the new schools with "all of the educational records of the child provided to the school."

CA has policy and procedure for the transfer of school records and there is statutory language urging "effective sharing of information" regarding the educational status and progress of youth in care. However, consistent knowledge about the laws, timelines and protocols for information sharing, and record transfers are not handled in the same way across the state.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Youth's foster care placement decisions take school stability into account, and school stability is a priority whenever possible and in the child's best interest.
- ⊙ Youth have sufficient foster home and permanent living options available in their home communities to reduce the need for school moves.
- ⊙ When in their best interests, youth have a right to remain in the same school (school of origin) even when they move outside the school district, and schools that retain children are not financially penalized.
- ⊙ Youth are entitled to necessary transportation to their school of origin, with responsibilities clearly designated for transportation costs.
- ⊙ Youth have necessary support and information to make school of origin decisions; youth, birth parents, caseworkers, foster parents, courts, attorneys, schools and educators are trained about legal entitlements and appeal and dispute procedures.
- ⊙ Youth can be enrolled in school by any person who has care or control of the child (i.e., caseworkers or foster parent).
- ⊙ Youth enrollment and delivery of appropriate services are not delayed due to school or record requirements (i.e., immunization records, birth certificates, school uniform); designated child welfare, education and court staff facilitates and coordinate transitions and receive training on special procedures.
- ⊙ Youth education records are comprehensive and accurate, and promptly follow youth to any new school or placement; records are kept private and shared only with necessary individuals working with the youth.
- ⊙ Youth who arrive in a new school during the school term are allowed to participate in all academic and extracurricular programs even if normal timelines have run or programs are full.
- ⊙ Youth receive credit and partial credit for coursework completed at a prior school.
- ⊙ Youth have the ability to receive a high school diploma even when they have attended

multiple schools with varying graduation requirements.

Source: *Blueprint for Change, 2008.*

Workgroup Recommended Promising Policy and Practice – Stability

In Washington State there is a well developed set of promising policy and practices regarding stability already in place; however, the workgroup felt there was work to be done to improve implementation of these policies and practices in the field.

Recommendations for Action – Stability

The workgroup’s findings focused on prioritization, clarification, training and implementation of stability policies and practices. The workgroup called out the need for the identification of stability as a strategic priority across all agencies and service providers, with the goal of establishing a common philosophy, data tracking, and practices aligned across the education spectrum. More specifically, addressing stability requires:

- **Shared Responsibility:** Education/school stability for youth in care is a shared responsibility that needs to be embedded in law/policy governing school districts and CA. It is necessary for local school districts and CA to continue to recognize and actively share responsibility for educational/school stability for children and youth in foster care. One means of doing so is heightening awareness of federal regulations in the Fostering Connections Act, and to continue to implement School District Agreements within each of the 295 School Districts across Washington State.
- **Clarification of Best Interest:** Improvements in implementation will be facilitated by providing guidelines regarding the decision making process to determine a child’s best interest in school stability/placement; those guidelines should be universally well understood and put to use by youth, families, judiciary, social workers, CASA volunteers, school staff and caregivers.
- **Increased Training Opportunities:** by producing training materials and guides, and conducting trainings statewide with all members of the youth in care community, including legislative and judiciary partners.

Workgroup members came up with many proposed recommendations in service to the goal of stable school placements.

Securing the most Appropriate and Best Possible Educational Placement

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners |
|---|--|
| At the time of placing the youth, prioritize placing in the school of origin if at all possible. | Treehouse, local districts and schools |
| Direct Placement Coordinators to consider education placement, and clearly outline this priority in the new foster parent recruitment contracts. | Treehouse, local districts and schools |
| Engage biological parent(s). Clearly outline their role in their child’s education and engage them in decision making. Utilize school buildings for shared planning meetings. | Treehouse, local districts and schools |
| All permanency planning and solution-based casework will: | Treehouse, Casey Family |

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider education stability and success in all decisions, particularly permanency and transition planning meetings include knowledgeable community partners who can provide information on educational resources | Programs, College Success Foundation, local school staff, Independent Living Program staff |
| Create a standardized form to be part of the shelter care order which outlines education, health, and travel responsibilities assigned to the named caregiver that will be sent to the school upon placement. This form will also contain detailed information regarding the roles and rights of the foster parent and social worker, which will help educate and inform the school. | Treehouse, local districts and schools, |
| Develop an educational stability training, based on the Washington State Judicial Checklist and the ABA Judicial Checklist, for Juvenile and Dependency Courts so that judges have the tools and information they need to address education comprehensively at each meeting. | Court Improvement Training Academy, Team Child, Casey Family Programs, Center for Children and Youth Justice, Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care, Columbia Legal Services |
| <p>Convene stakeholders to have a high level discussion regarding “best interest decision making.”</p> <p>Clarify and outline the process for “best interest” decision making between social worker, school, caregiver, biological parent, and any other identified adult regarding school placement decisions. (McKinney Vento, IDEA, etc.)</p> | OSPI, school districts, local schools, community-based organizations, Team Child, Casey Family Programs, Center for Children and Youth Justice, Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care, Columbia Legal Services |
| Provide school transportation for all youth who come into care to enable same school continuity. | OSPI, school districts |

| Recommendations for Other Washington State Education Partners | Potential Partners |
|---|--|
| Involve youth in all decisions that impact their lives. (education, placement, court, etc.) | Youth, local schools, courts |
| Support education reform initiatives to build a support strategy in schools for vulnerable youth, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the transfer and acceptance of credits across school districts, increased credit retrieval programs and opportunities | OSPI, school districts, local schools, community-based organizations, community and technical colleges |
| Group all highly mobile, vulnerable youth as a policy target for the development of school district strategies, including policies, resources and programming. | Local school boards, OSPI, school districts, local schools |
| Replicate or expand RCW 74.13.560 within the education system to mirror the current child welfare expectations regarding educational outcomes of youth in care. | Local school boards, OSPI, school districts, local schools |

Educational records that follow students’ school placement

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners |
|--|---------------------------|
| Strengthen the process for education records request and | AG’s office |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| timely transfer of education information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a standard statewide CA/CHET cover letter that outlines the RCW pertaining to records sharing timelines and responsibilities | |
| Develop quality assurance process for social workers to document educational records into Famlink. | Local schools |
| Develop quality assurance process for caregivers to receive educational records upon a youth's placement. | Caregivers |

| Recommendations for Other Washington State Education Partners | Potential Partners |
|---|--|
| Replicate or expand RCW 74.13.560 within the education system to mirror the current child welfare expectations regarding educational outcomes of youth in care. | Local school boards, OSPI, school districts, local schools |

2. A Successful Educational Experience

Goal: Securing an effective, responsive and appropriate educational experience middle school through postsecondary certificate or degree.

The mission of our public education system is to prepare our children for their civic and personal lives and careers by providing them with knowledge and skill sets that equip them to succeed in life. We know that the benefits of education are particularly powerful for youth in care, including enabling a sense of connectedness and security, building relationships with adults and orienting individuals toward economic self sufficiency (Roadmap for Learning, 2008). As the workgroup reviewed educational milestones for youth in care, it was clear that the markers of appropriate academic progress and success are virtually the same for youth in care as it is for any student in Washington. However, the array of barriers that might stand in the way of a successful educational experience is different for youth in care compared to the general population of students.

Youth in care are more likely to be classified as learning disabled, experience disruptions in school attendance, as well as find it challenging to participate in aspects of school life that are enriching and engaging such as clubs, sports and after school activities. Youth in care, like other populations of vulnerable youth, require well implemented and thoughtful educational services which are research-based and considered best practice to enable school success. These services include attention to academic progress, support for college readiness and access as well as smooth post care education transitions.

All these elements when working properly can provide an effective and student-centered educational experience. The challenge to everyone in the youth in care community is to acknowledge, learn about and proactively address these elements as key to an educational success strategy for youth in care. Each element is presented here with its own set of promising policy and practices. Recommendations are addressed at the end of this section of the report.

Appropriate classification of learning needs

The educational system provides many kinds of supports for students with learning disabilities, but the process of making that determination is highly regulated (mostly stemming from federal law and funding programs) and usually complex, requiring navigation and cooperation between and among the child, their families/advocates and schools. Classification of a youth – the formal determination of learning disabilities - brings with it services and supports but also a label that can be associated with lower expectations for academic achievement, potentially different

assignment and treatment in classrooms and shifts in instructional opportunities. Best practices in the instruction of the learning disabled or those who fall just under the bar of classification continue to evolve, requiring keen attention to new, well researched policies and practices. Balancing the benefits and drawbacks for youth in care requires particularly careful investigation and thoughtfulness. Advocacy for the best possible academic outcomes for the individual student during both the procedural portion of the classification process as well as in an ongoing oversight capacity is crucial. CA plays a role through its Child Health and Educational Track (CHET) process. The CHET screening takes place within 30 days of a child entering care. CHET is a comprehensive screening that reviews the child's education and health status and includes gathering information such as, school performance, school records, and any need for referral to education services (tutoring, education advocacy, etc.). This is to provide important well-being information to the social worker and caregiver as case plans are developed.

Taking all these factors into account, the workgroup came up with promising policy and practices for consideration to improve Washington State practice regarding youth in care.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Youth with disabilities are located, appropriately evaluated and identified as eligible (or not) for special education services.
- ⊙ Youth with disabilities receive the help they need to learn content appropriate to their grade level or, when that is not possible, the content that is appropriate to their learning level.
- ⊙ Youth with disabilities receive their education in regular classrooms with the necessary supports and accommodations whenever possible.
- ⊙ Youth that are not eligible for special education, are provided appropriate alternate supports
- ⊙ Youth are not inappropriately placed in nonpublic schools or other alternative school settings, including schools for students with disabilities.
- ⊙ The youth's school designates one lead staff person whose responsibility is to monitor the youth's educational progress and communicate with the designated parent, child welfare parties and legal parties.
- ⊙ All parties in agencies and schools recognize the adult designated "parent", as defined by IDEA law, and ensure that the designated parent receives the information, support, and training he or she needs in order to be an effective educational advocate.
- ⊙ While respecting the youth's privacy, the school, designated parent, child welfare parties and legal parties need to share education information that is important to a youth's wellbeing and success in a consistent and timely manner among.
- ⊙ All parties in the child welfare and legal systems are aware of a youth's special education needs and are aware of all the special education services and supports the youth has been receiving and is entitled to.
- ⊙ All parties in agencies and schools are trained to be aware of, and pay sufficient attention to, mental health and behavioral needs of youth in care so that difficulties in social competencies that are related to academic and behavioral challenges in school can be anticipated and mitigated.

Source: Workgroup Analysis, Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care; Road Map for Learning

Low rates of out of class time

Youth in care are all too often exposed to trauma, poor adult role models and instability in their lives which might manifest into behavioral problems in a school setting. Truancy, disruptive behavior, and disciplinary infractions can result, with unfavorable implications for students' learning outcomes because instructional time and continuity is disrupted. A pattern of out of class time is well recognized as being a precursor to school dropout. (Blueprint for Change, 2008).

As with classification for learning needs, full awareness of a youth in care's situation and requirements for support goes a long way in determining how to mitigate behaviors that increase out of class time and prevent students from dropping out of school. The Workgroup's promising policy and practices for this element of a successful educational experience draws on a policy and practice knowledge base that is new and growing. The focus is on ensuring that the adults both in school and in the foster care system are informed and trained to both identify and effectively deal with these situations in schools but also through alternative educational pathways available to students who will not or cannot thrive in a customary school setting.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⦿ Youth are not disproportionately subject to school discipline or school exclusion, and are not placed in alternative schools for disruptive students as a means to address truancy or as a disciplinary measure or as a response to school mobility.
- ⦿ Youth have access to school counselors and other school staff trained to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect, and the staff has mastered effective remediation strategies.
- ⦿ Youth have positive relationships with advocates, trained on procedures related to dropout, truancy and discipline, who support the youth at school disciplinary and other proceedings.
- ⦿ Youth at risk of truancy or dropping out are identified as early as possible and have access to programs and supports designed to successfully engage them in school.
- ⦿ Youth who have dropped out of school have access to programs and supports designed to reintegrate them into a high school completion program, General Educational Development (GED) program, or community college program.
- ⦿ Youth with disabilities have behavior intervention plans in place to minimize inappropriate school behaviors and to reduce the need for disciplinary action or referral to the police.
- ⦿ Youth with disabilities receive the procedural protections outlined in federal law so that they are not punished for behavior that is a symptom of their disability.

Source: Workgroup Analysis, Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care

Quality educational services

Quality education services to youth in care invoke the same concerns as for the general population of students, including ensuring appropriate academic progress, providing support for post secondary or technical school preparation and planning and making sure that these school-based elements are operationalized with research-based best practices.

There are many federal programs dealing with supplemental educational inputs for low income and special education students, as well as education reform efforts that require schools with large numbers of low income youth to track and measure student outcomes. Many, if not all, of these federal programs and policies also pertain to youth in care. The workgroup derived promising policy and practices and recommendations from federal requirements, existing

literature and their own expertise. They looked closely at each of the three aspects of quality education services: academic progress, college readiness/access and use of research-based practices.

Academic progress

The analysis of the promising policy and practices for academic progress mirrored the academic milestones determined by the workgroup for middle and high school students: this includes a set of academic progress markers, experiences and supports that adults charged with managing and monitoring the educational progress of youth in care should be able to track. A comparison between the way policies and practices are undertaken become difficult due to confidentiality.

Regulations like the Federal Education Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) create significant challenges to implementing promising policies and practices. Currently there is no active identification at the school level of youth in care, which suggests that administrators, counselors and teachers may not know who among their students are in foster care. Foster students are enrolled on an individual basis and caregivers and social workers are coordinating with school personnel regarding students' needs. CA is currently developing an education report in FamLink which will assist the courts, caregivers, social workers and youth in understanding educational progress.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Youth are achieving at grade level during their K-12 progression.
- ⊙ Youth have supports to improve performance on statewide achievement tests and other measures of academic success (such as attendance and graduation).
- ⊙ Youth are surrounded by school and child welfare professionals with appropriate training and strategies to engage youth in education planning and reengage those that get off track academically.
- ⊙ Youth exit mandatory public education demonstrating state learning objectives.
- ⊙ Tracking and analyzing individual achievement data (grades and assessments) takes place consistently throughout the course of K-12.
- ⊙ Youth have 12 months of housing (year-round) and other basic needs such as meals, transportation and health insurance determined as they transition to postsecondary education.
- ⊙ Youth have access to all possible financial aid and a comprehensive financial aid package.
- ⊙ Youth have access to academic advising, career counseling and supplemental support through a well-informed, identifiable academic advisor in postsecondary school.
- ⊙ Youth's need for personal guidance, counseling and supplemental support in college on personal and career planning is the responsibility of a well-informed and identifiable individual or agency.

Source: Workgroup Analysis, Source: Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care; Road Map for Learning; California College Pathways Annual Report 2008

College readiness and access

A clear postsecondary plan and direction for college and career is a goal for every Washington student. Poor outcomes for youth in care indicates that providing the right supports for students regarding college readiness and access must be a conscientious and prioritized pursuit on the part of the youth in care community if we hope to improve student outcomes. Fortunately, in recent years there has been national attention to the issue of youth in care and college, much of it coming from studies sponsored by Casey Family Programs. Washington State has had several cutting edge programs, at the state level this includes the Passport to College Foster Promise program and at the federal level the Chafee Foster Care Independence programs; as

well as robust intermediary organizations to address school advocacy, training, high school completion and college enrollment.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Students have high quality and consistent learning experiences in preparation for college and career planning in middle school providing them with knowledge of high school graduation and college eligibility requirements, and awareness of the multiple pathways and options to post-secondary success.
- ⊙ Students create, review and revise their High School and Beyond Plan during each year of secondary school
- ⊙ Students receive high quality and consistent coaching through a well-informed, identifiable academic advisor in secondary and postsecondary school
- ⊙ Students receive learning experiences throughout high school concerning the specific steps required for college and career entry, including
 - College selection, admissions, scholarships and financial aid
 - Opportunity to visit one or more college or university campuses
 - Meet peers and role models who have successfully completed a post-secondary certificate or higher education degree
 - Opportunity to gain experiences through involvement in businesses and/or organizations
- ⊙ Students complete an educational transition plan during the 90 day period before high school graduation
- ⊙ Students entering college have completed remedial courses, if required, and hold basic college level skills as indicated by college placement test results.
- ⊙ Student is provided personal guidance, counseling and supplemental support in college on personal and career planning
- ⊙ Students enrolling in 4 year, community or technical colleges accumulate the equivalent of at least 15 credits during their first two quarters of enrollment and 30 credits during the first year of enrollment.

Source: Blueprint for Change, 2008; Workgroup Analysis, Education Success for Children in Foster Care; Road Map for Learning; California College Pathways Annual Report 2008

Use of research-based approaches

Federal education policy has emphasized the need to proceed with responsibility and care with the installation of new educational policies and practices by requiring policy makers and education reformers to produce research and evidence supporting proposed changes. A more disciplined approach to accumulating data and testing and vetting new ideas has resulted, as well as guides and inventories identifying the most important and effective educational policies, practices and procedures. Although this is an evolving knowledge base, it should be fully leveraged in the Washington education framework for youth in care. In particular, the workgroup noted that the determination of best practices as well as indicators and measures of academic progress are available to use as reference points for Washington State.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Education planning for youth in care involves them and incorporates practices that are predictors of education success such as completion of high school including school placement stability, plans for postsecondary education and career options, employment experiences, and positive relationships with adult advocates.
- ⊙ Individual student success indicators (education plans, grades, school attendance, course taking completion, overall well-being) are identified, tracked and analyzed for early warning signs of individual going off track academically throughout the course of secondary and postsecondary education and for students meeting specific education milestones.
- ⊙ Research-based best practices relative to education outcomes for youth in care and alumni are used in providing training and professional development for foster parents, case workers, secondary and postsecondary educators, mentors, foster care providers and contractors and members of the court system.
- ⊙ Research based and easily assessable tools are developed to better assess education and career options for youth in care and alumni.
- ⊙ Research based best practice are applied to improve cooperation and collaboration among and between agencies, providers, contractors, and organizations serving youth in care and alumni.
- ⊙ State accountability measures for education agencies (HECB, SBCTC and OSPI) are researched and applied to better serve youth in care and alumni.

Source: Workgroup Analysis, Source: Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care; Road Map for Learning; California College Pathways Annual Report 2008

Access to all aspects of the school experience

One of the most significant means of preventing truancy and dropout behavior is ensuring that a student holds a feeling of connectedness and interest in school (Bridgeland et al, 2006). One of the striking results of unstable school placements and shifts in domicile can be barriers that prevent youth in care from taking full advantage of a school experience and thereby not becoming engaged in school. This might include not being able to access supplemental academic programs, extra-curricular activities like sports teams and clubs and social events. These aspects of school also feed into an individual's maturation process as they push an individual to be persistent and responsible, as well as present team membership and leadership opportunities. These experiences should be considered essential to schooling, not optional or unnecessary. The workgroup believes that coming up with strategies to enable students to experience the full school experience requires some thoughtfulness and attention on the part of adults in the youth in care community. Awareness and consideration of how to accommodate these needs could go a long way.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Youth are entitled and encouraged to participate in all aspects of the school experience, including academic programs, extracurricular activities and social events, and are not excluded because of being in out of home care.
- ⊙ Youth receive the additional supports and resources necessary to be included in all aspects of the school experience, including academic programs, extracurricular activities and social events.
- ⊙ Child welfare agency provides caregivers with the training, resources and support necessary to ensure that the youth in their care have access to all aspects of the school experience.
- ⊙ Youth's appointments and court appearances are scheduled to minimize their impact on the child's education, and children are not penalized for school time or work missed because of court or child welfare case-related activities.
- ⊙ Youth with disabilities receive their education in regular classrooms with the necessary supports and accommodations whenever possible.

Source: Workgroup Analysis, Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care

Smooth post care education transitions

The transition from care due to reaching permanency objectives or aging out of care is one of the most important periods in the life of a youth. There are many concerns regarding how to ensure educational continuity and success at this crucial turning point, as indicated in the educational milestones that the workgroup put together. New attention to how best to preserve continuity and attention to educational goals has flowed from federal and state efforts to fund fundamental transition concerns such as housing, transportation, and communication. Attention to facilitating high school completion and college entry has also been taken up by federal authorities. Washington State has piloted efforts targeted to ease post care transition and facilitate educational progress (Burley, 2009; Burley and Lee 2010). The workgroup built on the specific issues and lessons learned from these efforts with a list of promising policy and practices. These focus on consistent and persistent information provision and planning for the youth in care, as well as the presence of knowledgeable, well-trained adults from the youth in care community (education and child welfare providers) to oversee the process, navigate procedures and help ensure each student receives the appropriate mix of services and supports.

Promising Policy and Practices

- ⊙ Caregivers, child welfare, legal and education professionals consistently convey the expectation of high school graduation and also the aspiration of postsecondary education or training.
- ⊙ Youth in care and alumni receive supports and resources to ensure that life issues do not become overwhelming and distract them from completing high school and accessing a postsecondary program.
- ⊙ Throughout middle and high school, youth in care and alumni are made aware of the transitioning into adulthood process (utilizing age-appropriate content) and are provided with information and resources to help them prepare for the transition.
- ⊙ Youth in care are entitled to have a knowledgeable and trained education advocate who reinforces the value of the youth's investment in education and helps the youth plan for post-school training, employment, or college.
- ⊙ Provide an array of post-permanency services and supports to families, whether a child exits foster care through reunification, adoption, or guardianship, in order to ensure that a child remains safely in their permanent home.
- ⊙ Youth exiting care because of age or because their permanency objectives have been reached have significant connections to at least one adult to help the youth continue education pursuits.
- ⊙ Youth exiting care because of age or because their permanency objectives have the necessary supports to pursue postsecondary education and/or training.
- ⊙ Youth over 18 can remain in care and under the courts' jurisdiction to receive support and protection while pursuing postsecondary education.
- ⊙ Education, legal and child welfare systems, as well as all other professionals and caring adults who support the youth, work together seamlessly to prepare youth to move into adult living, meeting together to create an integrated independent transitions plan and incorporate youth preferences.
- ⊙ Youth in postsecondary settings have opportunities for student community engagement and leadership in college life, including developing a sense of community, leadership and advocacy skills.
- ⊙ Social workers and caregivers are trained on how to support youth throughout the transition process, and are consistently provided information regarding the current transition related resources and supports available to youth in care and alumni.

Source: Workgroup Analysis, Workgroup Analysis, Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care; Road Map for Learning, Improving Outcomes for Older Youth in Foster Care

Recommendations for Action – Successful Educational Experience

As with the strategic area focus on stability, this cluster of issues elicited a large amount of possible recommendations for action from the workgroup.

Once again, the workgroup identified a set of fundamental and overarching actions that need to be taken as well as more powerful and specific steps to help ensure a successful educational experience for youth in care.

There are a number of consistent themes that run through these recommendations:

- **Accountability within agencies** is an important theme across all of these recommendations. This entails conscientiously naming responsible parties and reporting lines as a feature of policy, procedure and practice.
- **Active collaboration across sectors.** Recommendations consistently reflect concerns about improving data systems and establishing persistent and active collaboration on many levels between CA, OSPI, school districts and schools.
- **Awareness raising.** The workgroup highlighted the need to make concerted efforts to raise awareness among everyone in the youth in care community about the resources and services available to aid students, whether this concerns their special learning needs, school behavior issues, academic progress tracking or college readiness.
- **Common knowledge base.** Youth in care have many rights/protections/services and resources accorded to them under laws such as McKinney-Vento, IDEA and Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, Title I, etc., and this must be part of the common knowledge base held by youth, their care givers and their service providers.

Appropriate classification of learning needs

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners |
|---|-----------------------|
| Develop policy and procedure to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify who is acting as the “parent”, consistent with IDEA law, on behalf of the youth • inform legal and education parties of the designated “parent”, along with information regarding the “parent’s” rights and responsibilities | Treehouse, Team Child |

Low Rates of Out of Class Time

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners |
|---|--|
| Develop tracking to ensure that youth’s appointments and court appearances are scheduled to minimize their impact on the youth’s education, and youth are not penalized for school time or work missed because of court or child welfare case-related activities. | Juvenile and Dependency courts |
| Develop explicit internal policies and procedures regarding when and how social workers and foster parents need to intervene when education issues such as school truancy, discipline and exclusion arise. | School districts, local schools, Treehouse, Team Child |
| Develop internal “red flag” indicators to help identify youth with potential academic and/or behavioral problems that social workers and caregivers can watch for, along with appropriate interventions. | School districts, local schools, Treehouse, Team Child |

Quality Education Services

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners |
|---|--|
| Provide training at the school building level to ensure there is staff proficient in working with highly vulnerable youth who have experienced trauma, as well as policy and procedures related to truancy, behavioral issues, etc., This person would be part of the designated advocate for youth at any proceedings regarding the youth’s offense(s). This is under Building Bridges purview. Reinvigorating Student Intervention Teams (SIT) team’s in school buildings attention to youth in care is another possible structure to use with social workers sitting on that team in the most high need districts. (Region 6 used to do this.) | Local schools, mental health agencies, OSPI |
| Education planning for foster youth should involve them and incorporate practices that are predictors of education success such as completion of high school including school placement stability, plans for postsecondary education and career options, employment experiences, and positive relationships with adult advocates. | School Systems, OSPI |
| Expand Education Lead positions to be full-time and focused on building strong relationships with schools and districts to facilitate improved educational outcomes for youth in care. | School districts, Local schools |
| Develop individual student success indicators (i.e., education plans, grade point average, school attendance, transcript) to identify early risk signs. | School districts, Local schools, OSPI Treehouse, and CSF |
| Collaborate with individual schools to create, review and revise the high school and beyond plan for every student in foster care, and incorporate it into Famlink. | Local schools |
| Provide youth with the financial resources needed to participate in the full school experience. For example, funds for class and graduation photos, yearbooks, club/sport/event fees, etc. | Local schools |

| Recommendations for Washington State | Potential Partners |
|---|--|
| Encourage schools districts to designate one lead staff person at the school district level with appropriate training whose responsibility is to serve as a liaison/resource for other agencies about youth’s educational progress and communicate with the agencies, designated parent, child welfare parties and legal parties. | OSPI, school districts, local schools, Treehouse |

Smooth Post-Care Education Transitions

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners |
|--|---|
| Provide all youth in care with a safe and viable transition plan for exiting care. | Youth, community-based organizations, local schools, caregivers |
| Develop a standardized youth-centered framework for the shared planning meetings focused on developing a | Youth, community-based organizations, local schools, |

| | |
|---|--|
| transitional plan. | caregivers |
| Update the <i>Social Worker Guide for Youth Transitioning from Care</i> to include tips and tools for social workers to be knowledgeable of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high school graduation requirements • college eligibility requirements • the multiple pathways and options to post-secondary success | Youth, community-based organizations |
| Provide six months of “aftercare” support services to youth upon leaving care. | Youth, community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions |
| Update www.independence.wa.gov to include available supplemental academic support and college preparation programs. | Youth, community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions, school districts, OSPI, local schools |
| Develop and implement a series of post-secondary readiness, access, and success workshops for all youth in care through middle and high school. | Youth, community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions, school districts, OSPI, local schools |
| Coordinate the various plans (i.e. High School and Beyond, life skills, etc.) into the 17.5 shared staffing meeting. | Youth, local schools, school districts |

| Recommendations for Washington State | Potential Partners |
|---|---|
| Dependency matters will not be dismissed until a safe and viable transition plan has been identified for all youth reaching age 18. | Juvenile and dependency courts, youth, caregivers, community-based organizations, |

3. Interagency Collaboration, Coordination and Communication

Goal: Improved coordination and collaboration between and among state agencies, programs and organizations supporting youth in care’s educational pathways.

Reports, studies and policy papers consistently indicate that interagency collaboration, coordination and communication is critical to managing and improving educational outcomes for youth in care at the local, state and national levels (A Roadmap for Learning, 2004; Weinberg et al, 2009). This is an issue that touches multiple systems which are in and of themselves complex: the system of care provided by state agencies, the judiciary system, the legislature, the public education system and the service providers/organizations that support youth in care. Without question, the strategic focus areas of school placement stability and a successful academic experience require high levels of collaboration, coordination and communication among all the players in the youth in care community. The workgroup feels that this issue area is so important that it should be both an overarching principle of any state education framework as well as an area of strategic focus. Collaboration, coordination and communication across these systems is also the main force behind establishing a system of accountability around improved education outcomes.

While acknowledging the endemic nature of this barrier to an effective education strategy for youth in care, the three elements of interagency relations that the workgroup focused on were data (sharing/infrastructure/confidentiality), training and establishing advocates for youth.

Data Sharing/Infrastructure/Confidentiality

Data about youth in care means information, and information means insight on what is taking place in the life of that child, youth or young adult. The workgroup believes that the first and foremost priority of interagency collaboration, coordination and communication is sharing essential data between existing data systems and tracking that data to be able to understand an individual youth in care's educational progress or lack thereof, as well as what is happening at the school, school district or state level. There is both a high level use of data for accountability and planning purposes, as well as an on the ground need for data and information concerning students. As eloquently stated in the recent report "Solving the Data Puzzle" (2008) the power of data driven decision making is indisputable:

The information we gather and share across systems allows us to track trends, deficits, and improvements for children in foster care. It can help shape education and child welfare policies, programs and practices and support increased funding for effective program. Moreover, access to an individual child's education information is critical to providing her with appropriate services. (p.1)

Data silos are a central challenge to meaningful data use. The newest links are being forged between labor and education agencies, but even these are relatively rare (SHEEO, 2010). The importance of integrated data is a widely recognized, however, and includes federal legislation to encourage the building of integrated data system within social welfare agencies (so-called Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems, or SACWIS) alongside a national effort through the non-profit Data Quality Campaign and U.S. Department of Education dollars to create state K-16 integrated education data systems. These parallel efforts are mirrored in Washington State with the migration to a web-based SACWIS system known as *FamLink* by CA and a move to upgrade K-20 data integration through the newly formed Washington School Information Processing Collaborative (WSIPC).

Along with the existence of those data silos, (not to mention considerable concerns regarding costs of integration, the need for high level technical support and the lack of personnel dedicated to managing data integration), a substantial barrier arises around confidentiality regulations, most of which stem from federal law. Restrictions on data sharing outlined by FERPA, HIPAA and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) stem from an intent to protect individual privacy.

However, national and Washington State efforts have been undertaken to enable appropriate data sharing while still following the intent of the law. CA has developed guidelines around data sharing which for social workers and educators.. Notable Washington State examples of data sharing arrangements include the data exchange to identify eligible youth for the Passport to College program between CA and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). Other examples include a recent agreement between the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and the HECB and a record level data exchange between OSPI and the HECB in support of the College Bound Scholarship. CA and the research institute WSIPP also have a robust aggregate data agreement.

The art of the possible has been demonstrated by these efforts: it is now important to figure out how Washington State might be able to get to the next step in data sharing and reporting – consolidated data collection and analysis of essential educational information.

Common Understanding and Training Across Agencies

No one state agency, school district, or school can ensure that a child, youth or alumni of state care has secured a successful education. Committed leadership and cooperation among the various agencies and service providers is required to bring about that outcome. Unfortunately

there is a tangle of bureaucratic infrastructure, funding, evolving policies and even vocabulary and belief systems to overcome, as well documented by various studies (See Weinberg et al, 2009).

CA and other members of the youth in care community view training as a key practice to build a common knowledge base, but all too often training opportunities are siloed by program, agency or geography. Facilitating consistent and persistent training requires taking the mechanism of training to the next level: rethinking configuration, delivery and what interagency participation really means.

Interagency training not only provides the chance for ongoing provision of new knowledge to participants, it also encourages representatives from different agencies and systems to share information from their agency's perspective. Training is an opportunity to identify and talk through barriers to better outcomes in a fashion that leverages and respects each agency's authority, expertise, responsibilities, roles, and accountability. A list of possible topics for training and information sharing has been developed by Casey Family Programs as well as Washington State practitioners. (See below).

Social Workers need training in the following:

- How the education system works and its related legal issues
- The best methods social workers can use to promote a youth's education success (e.g., attendance at school meetings, accessing supplemental education resources, ensuring that a youth's mental health needs are managed)
- The importance of school placement stability and its role in home and school placement decisions
- The institutional, social, and structural barriers that may prohibit good collaboration (e.g., institutional racism and stereotypes about the foster care system)
- How the educational classification system to determine student learning needs works, e.g. the process special education designation and what education for the disabled entails
- What youth need to be prepared for postsecondary education and training
- The financial aid application process and the national, state and local financial aid programs that youth in care are eligible for
- How to respond to judicial inquiries about educational progress

Caregivers need training in the following:

- Their role and responsibility in a child's education
- The social workers role and responsibilities in a child's education
- The importance of a continuous placement for academic success
- The role of the parent (IDEA)
- How to create a home environment that supports learning and educational success
- Resources available for K-12 and post-secondary education and training
- How to access educational advocacy support

Educators need training in the following:

- How and why youth come into out-of-home care
- Foster care policies and how they affect the operation of the child welfare system
- The roles of social workers, birth parents, foster parents, and other caregivers in making education decisions
- How to develop empathy and avoid stigmatizing youth in out-of-home care
- Specific ways they can support the education success of youth in out-of home care

- The unique emotional, practical, behavioral, social, intellectual, and academic challenges faced by youth in care, and how to respond to them
- How the disparate outcomes for children of color in the child welfare and judicial systems affect the education system
- The financial aid application process and the national, state and local financial aid programs that youth in care are eligible for
- Attorneys (representing the agency, parents or child), judges, parole and probation officers, juvenile detention staff, court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) and guardians ad litem (GALs) need training in the following:
 - The importance of education success to a youth's well-being, safety, and successful transition to adulthood
 - How court expectations and standards influence the ways social workers, educators, service providers, parents, and child advocates (attorney, CASA or GAL), respond to a youth's education needs
- CASAs, GALs, and attorneys representing children's interests also need training in the following:
 - How to adequately assess a youth's education progress, identify any concerns and report progress or concerns to the court, social worker or others
 - Effective methods of advocacy for a youth's education needs

Source: A Roadmap for Learning, 2008; Social Worker's Guide to Education, 2007

Advocates for Youth

The need for a designated, responsible and well trained adult to monitor, advise and advocate on educational issues for youth or young adults in care was highlighted in the strategic focus area concerning successful educational experiences. Workgroup members also noted youth and young adults in care encounter many different adults from different agencies and organizations, playing various roles in the decisions impacting their education. The more programs or services that a youth in care may be eligible for, the more adults might become involved. The concern around this situation is that no one adult may be positioned to see the big picture and help secure and manage the various components of a youth's educational concerns, services and supports. The needs and the expertise required to assist with the educational needs of a youth in care may change over time. Therefore a clearly designated adult to hold oversight responsibilities and legal authority during middle school, high school, and after secondary school completion is essential. The new service delivery design in Children's Administration through Performance Based Contracting may, in part, be an answer to this dilemma.

Workgroup Recommended Promising Policy and Practices – Interagency Collaboration, Coordination and Communication

The workgroup found that in Washington State there have been a number of legislative efforts to encourage agencies to work together, particularly around data sharing. To make the most of this work there needs to be a call on education partners, state education agencies, school districts and schools themselves, for continued cooperation, participation and collaboration in these efforts. The workgroup believes it is very important to raise awareness and provide training opportunities. This will strengthen and enhance existing partnerships and create new ones.

Promising Policy and Practices

Data Sharing/Infrastructure/Confidentiality

- ⊙ Youth educational progress is tracked by a systematic, integrated data system available to provide essential information at both the individual and aggregate level to appropriate individuals supporting educational progress.
- ⊙ While protecting the rights of individual youth and young adults, FERPA and HIPAA are carefully addressed so as not to prohibit data sharing (aggregate or individual) particularly when it pertains to serving or supporting youth in care and alumni.
- ⊙ Information sharing about youth and young adults pertains to both aggregate and individual information.
- ⊙ Youth education and child welfare records are kept private and only shared with appropriate individuals working with the youth when needed for necessary supports and services.
- ⊙ Youth have access to their child welfare and education records at age 13.
- ⊙ Youth understand their right to confidentiality and their ability to consent to sharing information at age 13.

Common Understanding and Training across Agencies

- ⊙ Youth are served by agencies/organizations/institutions that communicate effectively and efficiently at both cross-departmental and cross-agency levels in order to ensure that youth receive timely and appropriate services and supports.
- ⊙ Youth served by agencies/organizations/institutions have the tools and procedures to effectively communicate for the best interest of the youth in a systematic and ongoing manner.
- ⊙ Agencies/organizations/institutions have clarity around the legal guidance supporting their inter and intra agency communication and information.
- ⊙ Agencies/organizations/institutions are trained on what and how information can be shared.

Advocates for Youth

- ⊙ Youth have a trained education advocate who reinforces the value of the youth's investment in education and helps the youth plan and pursue post-school training, employment or college. Efforts are made to recruit appropriate individuals (i.e., birth parents, foster parents, caseworkers, teachers, and guidance counselors) for that role.
- ⊙ Youth exiting care (because of age or because their permanency objective have been reached) have significant connections to at least one adult to help the youth continue education pursuits.
- ⊙ Youth have a designated education decision maker (a person acting as "parent" for educational purposes) at all times who is trained in the legal requirements relating to education decisions for children with and without disabilities.
- ⊙ For youth with disabilities who do not have an identified parent, the appointment of a surrogate parent from a pool of qualified, independent and well trained individuals who can serve in that role.

Source: Blueprint for Change, 2008; A Road Map for Learning, 2004; Workgroup Analysis

Recommendations for Action: Interagency Collaboration, Coordination and Communications

What can the state of Washington do to ensure resources and agencies are truly *invested* (heart and mind) in the educational success of youth in care and willing to cooperate with each other? At the root, this means establishing a pervasive and consistent culture of attention to educational outcomes among the various decision makers in the youth in care community: state government bodies like Children's Administration, the Office of the Superintendent of Public

Instruction, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the judiciary, the state legislature, as well as school districts, school buildings, care providers, agencies and foster families.

This would require establishing a culture of attention to education which prioritizes educational outcomes across systems, followed by clarifying and building a common knowledge base about protocols, regulations and practices between and among these partners. Consistent training opportunities could be put in place to ensure that the knowledge base continues to be updated and shared. The workgroup also encourages continued, thoughtful implementation of policy and practice between and among agencies, programs and organizations for an aligned and unified approach to tackling barriers to educational success.

The principle recommendation for this strategic focus area is to invigorate the overall supervision and coordination of the various interagency working groups, research efforts and initiatives that are presently taking place in the state.

This can be accomplished by joining with the Governor’s Education Research and Data Center’s (ERDC) efforts to develop a preschool through age 20 educational data system that can track individual student progress. The ERDC has been awarded significant federal funds to work with OSPI, DSHS, the Department of Early Learning, individual school districts, preschools, community colleges and universities to develop a database that will track the educational outcomes of all children in Washington, and can report these same outcomes for children in care and alumni of the child welfare system.

Common understanding of the interpretations and allowances under CAPTA, FERPA and HIPAA needs attention, as well as what might be possible in terms of truly integrated data reporting about youth in care. With awareness of California’s ongoing multi-regional effort to build data and information sharing capacity (See the “Ready to Succeed Initiative” sponsored by the Stuart Foundation), the workgroup understands that committed leadership and intentionality around data and information sharing are necessary but may not be sufficient for swiftly engineering improved policy and procedures. While these are models of interest and need to be reviewed for their strengths; Washington’s system structure is significantly different than California’s county model and may not be duplicated in its entirety in Washington state.

However, data held in common is a crucial starting place that supports sound case management and targets successful educational strategies. As ERDC works on these complex data-sharing issues, the workgroup suggests that specific recommendations regarding training rely on mapping and enhancing existing training practices, and securing advocates for youth to expand the continuum of advocacy needs that is required from middle school through post-secondary school.

Data sharing/Infrastructure/Confidentiality

| Recommendations for Washington State | Potential Partners |
|---|---------------------------|
| Partner with ERCD as they convene child welfare, education, and legal agencies to develop formalized information sharing policy and procedure that protects every student’s privacy, as outlined by federal law (FERPA, HIPAA, etc.), while also ensuring that every student receives an appropriate and quality education, as outlined by federal law (FCSIA,IDEA, NCLB, etc.) | EDRC project, |

Common Understanding and Training across Agencies

| Recommendations for Washington State | Potential Partners |
|---|---|
| Task the Education Oversight Committee with reviewing and coordinating existing efforts related to the educational outcomes of youth in care and alumni. | CA, OSPI, HECB, SBCTC, AG's office, CCYJ, Treehouse, CSF |
| Provide cross-training and support (on an ongoing basis) to child welfare, education, and legal professionals regarding information sharing policy and procedure. | CA, OSPI, HECB, SBCTC, AG's office, CCYJ, community-based organizations |

Advocates for Youth

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners |
|--|---|
| Develop policy and/or procedure which requires the identification of an "education advocate" for youth in care who will be responsible for overseeing services, support and issues related to education throughout the youth's time in care. | Youth, CA, community-based organizations, local schools, caregivers |

4 Next Steps for Strategy Development and Implementation

In the brief period of time that the workgroup convened, the group was able to indicate educational milestones for academic progress, pinpoint three strategic priority areas that potentially improve the educational outcomes of youth in care, establish promising policies and practices for those areas and produce recommendations for action for each one. This is essentially the basic bones, or framework, of a strategy for education success for youth in care. The workgroup believes that strategy development is an evolving process, and that this report's conclusions and recommendations are not the final word on how Washington State can improve the educational success for youth in care. At minimum, there are a number of additional steps to be taken in support of operationalizing and implementing this framework

NEXT STEPS

The following next steps are a response from Children's Administration (CA) regarding the workgroup recommendations.

CA has reviewed the 35 recommendations as put forward in this document for all children in out-of-home placement. CA worked with members from Passion to Action, CA Regional Administrators, Social Workers, Education Leads and the Attorney General's Office to prioritize the recommendations.

CA has focused on recommendations which are cost neutral, or have a minimal cost and can be achieved within the next 12-15 months. During our annual Child and Family Service Review meetings with our federal partners, they indicated a focus on two to three priorities and embedding them strongly into practice achieves better outcomes.

As noted below, some of the recommendations are completed as CA already has implemented identified tools or practices in the field. Based on internal recommendations, the highlighted strategies are prioritized for CA staff to complete within the next 12-15 months.

Stability: Securing the most Appropriate and Best Possible Educational Placement for Individual Students

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Create a standardized form to be part of the shelter care order which outlines education, health, and travel responsibilities assigned to the named caregiver, which will be sent to the school upon placement. This form will also contain detailed information regarding the roles and rights of the foster parent and social worker, which will help educate and inform the school.</p> | <p>Treehouse, local districts and schools,</p> | <p>CA will coordinate with regions on its current use and focus on the proper use within each region. This was identified by regional staff as a training issue on how to use the form in its current state. Proposed Completion Date: Summer 2011</p> |
| <p>All permanency planning and solution-based casework will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider education stability and success in all decisions, particularly permanency and transition planning meetings • include knowledgeable community partners who can provide information on educational resources | <p>Treehouse, Casey Family Programs, College Success Foundation, local school staff, Independent Living Program staff</p> | <p>CA continues to embed solution-based casework in casework practice. When the agency moves to Performance Based Contracting education will be a regularly scheduled agenda item to address with Lead Agencies.</p> |
| <p>Develop educational stability training, based on the Washington State Judicial Checklist and the ABA Judicial Checklist, for Juvenile and Dependency Courts so that judges have the tools and information they need to address education comprehensively at each meeting.</p> | <p>Court Improvement Training Academy, Team Child, Casey Family Programs, Center for Children and Youth Justice, Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care, Columbia Legal Services</p> | <p>CA will work with the Court Improvement Training Academy to identify and ensure the training needs around education stability for judges are being met. Proposed Completion Date: March 2012</p> |
| <p>Clarify and outline the process for “best interest” decision making between social worker, school, caregiver, biological parent, and any other identified adult regarding school placement decisions. (McKinney Vento, IDEA, etc.)</p> | <p>OSPI, school districts, and local schools, Treehouse</p> | <p>Family Team Decision Making meetings which occur under the umbrella of Shared Planning Staffings are the venue to address “best interests” and make joint decisions about the child’s school placement and well-being decisions. Proposed Completion Date: Ongoing</p> |
| <p>Provide school transportation for all youth who come into care to enable same school continuity.</p> | <p>OSPI, school districts</p> | <p>Transportation is addressed through the School District agreements.</p> |

Stability: Educational records that follow students' school placement

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|--------------------|--|
| <p>Strengthen the process for records request and timely transfer of education information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a standard statewide CA/CHET cover letter that outlines the RCW pertaining to records sharing timelines and responsibilities • Identify a resolution process when records are not transmitted in a timely manner | AG's office | <p>A standard statewide letter is currently being used to request education records which outlines RCW responsibilities Completion Date: 2009</p> |
| <p>Develop quality assurance process for social workers to document educational records into Famlink.</p> | Local schools | <p>CA is in the process of developing an education report which will provide the ability for increased Quality Assurance Proposed Completion Date: Still being determined</p> |
| <p>Develop quality assurance process for caregivers to receive educational records upon a youth's placement.</p> | Caregivers | <p>Current policy requires social workers to provide the child's out of home caregiver with copies of necessary school records including IEP and 504 Plans; one region recommended amending DSHS form 14-444 to include a signature line for caregivers. This can be an agenda item for the Education Leads for consideration of a form revision Proposed Completion Date: Summer 2011</p> |

Quality Education: Appropriate classification of learning needs

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| <p>Develop policy and procedure to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify who is acting as the "parent", consistent with IDEA law, on behalf of the youth • inform legal and education parties of the designated "parent", along with information regarding the "parent's" rights and responsibilities | Treehouse, Team Child | <p>CA AAG's are reviewing this recommendation</p> |

Quality Education: Low Rates of Out of Class Time

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|--|--|
| Develop tracking and accountability measures to ensure that youth's appointments and court appearances are scheduled to minimize their impact on the youth's education, and youth are not penalized for school time or work missed because of court or child welfare case-related activities | Juvenile and Dependency courts | Address via training and in coordination with caregivers; regional feedback included caregivers being responsible (as is any parent) for helping the child complete any school work missed due to absence from school. |
| Develop explicit internal policies and procedures regarding when and how social workers and foster parents need to intervene when education issues such as school truancy, discipline and exclusion arise | School districts, local schools, Treehouse, Team Child | CA's educational advocacy program, currently contracted through Treehouse addresses this issue. |
| Develop internal "red flag" indicators to help identify youth with potential academic and/or behavioral problems that social workers and caregivers can watch for, along with appropriate interventions | School districts, local schools, Treehouse, Team Child | CA is in the process of developing an education report which will provide the ability for increased Quality Assurance Proposed Completion Date: Still being determined |

Quality Education: Quality Education Services

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|---|--|
| Provide training at the school building level to ensure there is staff proficient in working with highly vulnerable youth who have experienced trauma, as well as policy and procedures related to truancy, behavioral issues, etc., This person would be part of the designated advocate for youth at any proceedings regarding the youth's offense(s). This is under Building Bridges purview. Reinvigorating Student Intervention Teams in school buildings attention to youth in care is another possible structure to use with social workers sitting on that team in the highest need districts. | Local schools, mental health agencies, OSPI | OSPI has collaborated with CA to provide an online training to school staff and administrators which addresses how to work with adolescence and young adults from foster care. OSPI also has a compassionate schools training initiative |
| Education planning for foster youth should involve them and incorporate practices that are predictors of education success such as completion of high school including school placement stability, plans | School Systems, OSPI | Family Team Decision Making meetings which occur under the umbrella of Shared Planning Staffings are one venue to address |

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|--|--|
| for postsecondary education and career options, employment experiences, and positive relationships with adult advocates. | | education planning. Youth who participate in programs such as SETuP and IL also have a venue to be involved in their education planning. Proposed Completion Date: Ongoing |
| Expand Education Lead positions to be full-time and focused on building strong relationships with schools and districts to facilitate improved educational outcomes for youth in care. | School districts, Local schools | This will be set as an item for management review. |
| Develop individual student success indicators (i.e., education plans, grade point average, school attendance, transcript) to identify early risk signs. | School districts, Local schools, OSPI Treehouse, and CSF | CA is in the process of completing an Education Report which tracks these identified data elements. Proposed Completion Date: Still being determined |
| Collaborate with individual schools to create, review and revise the high school and beyond plan for every student in foster care, and incorporate it into Famlink. | Local schools | CA can collaborate with schools to create the high school and beyond plan, but does not have the financial capacity to implement within FamLink. However, CA has, per federally required legislation, implemented an Education Plan page which social workers must complete within 60 days of initial out of home placement, update every six months and attach to the ISSP. |
| Provide youth with the financial resources needed to participate in the full school experience. For example, funds for class and graduation photos, yearbooks, club/sport/event fees, etc. | Local schools | These items are accounted for under current foster care reimbursement. Some of these costs may also be available through the Independent Living Program. |

Quality Education: Smooth Post- care Education Transitions

| Recommendations for Children’s Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|--|--|
| Provide all youth in care with a safe and viable transition plan for exiting care. | Youth, community-based organizations, local schools, | Completed; this is current CA policy and practice; a QA process has been |

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|--|---|
| | caregivers | developed and implemented. Completed: November, 2010 |
| Develop a standardized youth-centered framework for the shared planning meetings focused on developing a transitional plan. | Youth, community-based organizations, local schools, caregivers | CA has developed a youth centered and youth focused transition plan to be used during the 17.5 shared planning meetings. This is a required CA policy that went into effect October, 2010 Completed: October 2010 |
| Update the Social Worker Guide for Youth Transitioning from Care to include tips and tools for social workers to be knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high school graduation requirements • college eligibility requirements • the multiple pathways and options to post-secondary success | Youth, community-based organizations | Minimal cost – Proposed Completion for updates is set for late 2011 |
| Provide six months of “aftercare” support services to youth upon leaving care | Youth, community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions | CA is currently looking at the 2008 Fostering Connections legislation which allows states to extend foster care to age 21. There is proposed state legislation in Washington to extend foster care to age 19. Eligible Foster youth can receive transitional supportive services until their 21 st birthday. |
| Update www.independence.wa.gov to include available supplemental academic support and college preparation programs | Youth, community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions, school districts, OSPI, local schools | The website currently has information addressing this; however CA will review the feasibility of linking to additional educational websites not already featured. |
| Develop and implement a series of post-secondary readiness, access, and success workshops for all youth in care in middle and high school | Youth, community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions, school districts, OSPI, local schools | Contracted Independent Living Program providers offer these workshops. The SETuP program also works with youth age 14-18 on post secondary readiness and access. CA will re-visit implementation of a calendar on |

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|--|--|--|
| | | www.independence.wa.gov which provides information to youth and caregivers on upcoming events in their areas. |
| Coordinate the various plans into the 17.5 shared staffing meeting | Youth, local schools, school districts | CA policy currently requires consultation with community partners who are working with the youth when developing the transition plan for youth exiting care. Ca will explore the possibility of including other plans in the 17.5 shared staffing. |

Interagency Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication: Advocates for Youth

| Recommendations for Children's Administration | Potential Partners | Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| Develop policy and/or procedure which require the identification of an "education advocate" for youth in care who will be responsible for overseeing services, support and issues related to education throughout the youth's time in care. | Youth, community-based organizations, local schools, caregivers | Social workers retain the ultimate responsibility for addressing a child's education needs while in the custody and care of Children's Administration. There is also a contracted education advocacy program. |

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