IDENTIFYING RISK FACTORS AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS FOR TEACHERS

A Project

by

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Abstract

of

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The development of this project was the collaborative effort of both authors to provide teachers with the knowledge necessary to support students who are in foster care. Careful consideration to finding current research was made. The primary purpose of this project is to disseminate information about how to break down communication barriers that occur between the child welfare system and the education system, as well as risk factors, and associated evidence-based support services for working with students in foster care. It is the authors’ hope that by attending this workshop, teachers will learn how to identify and gain information about students in foster care, and develop an understanding and awareness about current California Education Code law. The workshop is also intended to present teachers with the risk factors associated with the foster care population, and a variety of support services that can be implemented at the classroom or school site level.
The workshop is intended to be three hours of training for teachers and/or school staff. The workshop includes a presenter’s manual, PowerPoint slides, and presenter’s notes. A supplementary Foster Care Resource Packet (FCRP) is available for those who attend the training. The FCRP provides teachers with handouts, resources, and templates about California Education Code, risk factors, and support services. Any credentialed mental health professional or teacher may present this workshop to an audience of teachers.

______________________________, Committee Chair
Catherine Christo, Ph.D.

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Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

America’s growing foster care population encounters an array of social, emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges. The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) reports, in 2010, over 400,000 children in foster care, with the average age of a child being 9 years old, and the average length of time spent in the system being 25 months. With a large portion of children in foster care being school-age, it is important that school staff members are armed with the knowledge base and skill set to best serve and support children in foster care.

Statement of Collaboration

This project was created in collaboration by both authors. Areas of research were divided into sections and designated to each author. Vanessa Romo researched risk-factors as they related to placement change and socialization. Melissa Ponce researched risk-factors as they related to internalizing disorders and externalizing disorders. Both authors worked together to identify research-based support services, and cross-system barriers that teachers encounter when working with students in foster care.

Background of the Problem

Children in foster care are at a higher risk for academic, behavioral, and social/emotional challenges, all of which can interfere with a child’s ability to be successful in school. The negative outcomes associated with these risk factors highlight the importance of teachers having the knowledge and skill set to identify and implement evidence-based support for students who are at-risk. Examples of risk include developing
below-grade level academic achievement, maladaptive behaviors, poor relationships, and internalized disorders, to name a few.

Current research suggests that teachers lack the knowledge to identify and support children in foster care. A breakdown in cross-system communication among the educational and child welfare system within schools exists, making it difficult for teachers to identify which students are in foster care. Research also suggests that teachers do not have access to, or are in search of, evidence-based support services that can be used to address the unique needs of students in foster care (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2010; Zetlin, MacLeod, and Kimm, 2010).

Unidentified at-risk students in foster care may go on to develop more severe problems if they are not identified and do not receive early intervention support services. Thus, it is important that teachers are empowered and trained to work with directly with this at-risk population.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Teachers are limited in their access to workshops wherein they can learn about supporting children in foster care. As a result, teachers are often left ill equipped to identify and work with students in foster care. Research suggests there is a lack of teacher workshops that provide information and tools about identifying children in foster care, the associated risk factors, and implementing evidence-based services.

**Purpose of this Project**

This study aims to break down cross-system barriers and identify support services for teachers who are working with children in foster care. The study also aims to identify
risk factors for children in foster care, in hopes that developing at-risk students can be better identified. The primary purpose of this study is to provide teachers with the knowledge base and skill set necessary for working with children in foster care, through a PowerPoint workshop. It is hoped that by arming teachers with this information, students who are in the foster care system can be better served and supported.

Definition of Terms

Cross-system barriers: Cross-system communication refers to the barriers in communication that occur among the major systems involved in the life of a child in foster care; the child welfare system and the educational system (Noonan, et al., 2012).

Children in Foster Care: School-age children who have been removed from the custody of their biological parents and moved to an out-of-home placement due to safety concerns, a serious parent-child conflict, or to treat serious or behavioral health conditions that cannot be met by the family, are referred to as “children in foster care” (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

School Staff: A student’s primary teacher(s), Resource Specialist Program (RSP) teacher(s), Speech & Language therapist, counselor, school psychologist, vice principal and principal.

Pro-social Relationships: A socially appropriate relationship between two students and/or relationship between the identified student and teacher that is sustained across a long period of time and fosters a sense of connectedness.

Protective Factors: Conditions or attributes in students that, when present, mitigate or eliminate risk in the child’s life, and when present, increase the health and well-being of
the child in foster care. Protective factors help teachers find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to teach effectively, under stress (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

**Justification**

Providing teachers with a workshop wherein they can access knowledge and skills for working with children in foster care will increase the level of support for this population within schools. Knowledge about how to identify and gather information about students in foster care, current educational codes and law, risk factors and associated support services, will provide teachers with a foundation to build from. Teachers with a knowledge base of this information can better identify at-risk children in foster care and provide them with appropriate support within the school. It is hoped that with the dissemination of this knowledge, schools will see a decrease in behavioral referrals, the need for academic intervention, and the rate of emotional concern among this population.

**Limitations**

It is important to note that this project identifies *evidence-based* support services that teachers can implement at school. The presented support services provided in this project is not an exhaustive list. Non-evidence-based support services may also be effective for some children in foster care; this project does not aim to discredit those that exist. That being said, each child carries with him or her, a unique set of experiences, and it is not guaranteed that the evidence-based support services provided in this project
will be completely effective. Some children may need more extensive wrap-around services to address more severe social, emotional, behavioral, academic issues.

This project utilizes California Education Code as a basis for understanding how to address cross-system communication among the welfare system and education system, and therefore, may not translate to other states across the nation.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children who have been removed from the custody of their biological parents and moved to an out-of-home placement due to safety concerns, a serious parent-child conflict, or to treat serious behavioral or health conditions that cannot be met by the family, are referred to as “children in foster care” (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Possible settings wherein children in foster care may reside include a relative’s home, foster family’s home, treatment foster home, or group/residential home. This literature review will primarily address school-age children in foster care who reside in a foster family’s home.

Children who experience multiple foster home or placement changes tend to exhibit an increase in behavioral and emotional problems (O’Neil, Risely-Curtiss, Ayon, and Williams, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to understand the challenges children in foster care experience, in order to provide them with adequate supports.

Whiting & Lee III (2003) interviewed children in foster care regarding their experiences in the foster system. A common theme reported among these children was the feeling of confusion regarding the reason for being removed from their biological parents’ custody and what their future life would entail. They also expressed feelings of fear and anger while in foster care. Whiting & Lee III (2003) reported the following statement from a child in foster care:

Yeah, foster care is just sick! I don’t want to hear about it at all. You get taken away from your parents. It ruins your life! Your heart is totally destroyed, and the
only thing that is left working in your body is your brain...That is why I want out of this foster care right now! (p. 292)

For this reason, it is vital that teachers understand the perspectives of these children in order to provide empathy and support. However, teachers often lack the information and resources necessary to support the unique needs of children in foster care. Current research suggests that teachers encounter a multitude of barriers that prevent them from identifying students who are in foster care, obtaining pertinent background information, and accessing appropriate support services for students in foster care. The current literature review is divided into three sections: common breakdowns in cross-system communication, risk factors, and evidence-based support services that are targeted to address the needs of students in foster care. Research supported, evidence-based services will be presented to address behavioral, social and emotional, and academic concerns. As indicated by Zetlin, MacLeod, and Kimm (2010), special and general education teachers are in need of in-service trainings or workshops that target how to best support the foster care population. The following literature review supports the need for such workshops for teachers working with children in foster care.

**Cross-System Communication**

Cross-system communication refers to the communication that occurs among the major systems involved in the life of a child in foster care; the child welfare system and the educational system. It is reported that teachers’ awareness of basic policies surrounding the educational and child welfare systems is lacking, which leads to miscommunication among the systems (Noonan et al., 2012).
Identifying Students in Foster Care

A study conducted by Zetlin, et al. (2010) found that there are no formal means used to inform teachers about which students are currently in foster care. Special and general education teachers typically report learning about a student being in foster care when a student or caregiver directly informed them. Direct informative approaches from the students were typically disclosed through personal in-class writings, or other similar informal means. Caregiver disclosure was likely to occur during parent-teacher conferences. Another way in which teachers identified students in foster care was through verbal disclosure from their colleagues, counselors, psychologists, therapists, administrators, other students, and even bus drivers. In some cases, teachers were able to identify that a student was in foster care through recognition of the student’s permanent group home address. While these means of disclosure do, in fact, identify students who are in the foster care system, they fail to do so with one hundred percent accuracy.

A portion of special education teachers in the Zetlin, et al. (2010) study learned that a student was in foster care through more formal means. In looking through the student’s cumulative (CUM) file, special education teachers were able to identify if a student was in foster care. The barrier, however, to using the CUM file as a means to identify students in foster care is that, due to the high frequency of school placements, there are often delays of CUM files being transferred to the current school of attendance. Sullivan, Jones, and Mathiesen (2010) reported that these CUM files are typically not available to the staff at the current school, or are at-risk of becoming lost completely, specifically for students who have education and/or behavioral problems. Frequent school
placements, which result in the loss or delay of a student’s CUM file, further contributes to the difficulty in identifying students who are in foster care.

**Basic Background Information**

Teachers report difficulties with obtaining access to basic background information regarding students in foster care. In a focus group study by Noonan et al. (2012) disclosure of information about a student in foster care was found to be a major barrier for teachers. School personnel indicated that information about a student in foster care is often disclosed only upon emergency situations by the child welfare system, instead of being disclosed as general knowledge. Similarly, child welfare caseworkers described frustration in learning about a student’s academics or attendance deterioration *after* the problem had already occurred. The lack of communication between the child welfare system and the education system makes it difficult for teachers to identify how to best support students in foster care.

Special education teachers tend to have more access to a student’s information than general education teachers. The study by Zetlin et al. (2010) reported that 40 percent of the general education teachers in the sample had received no background information for their students in foster care. In contrast, only 6 percent of special education teachers in the sample encountered this problem. Nonetheless, both groups reported difficulties in obtaining the name of the child’s attorney, the court appointed special advocate (CASA), and the identity of the holder of educational rights. Basic information about a student in foster care is not easily accessible for teachers.
CAL Edc Code §49076(a)(11) states that social workers and probation officers may access the child’s school records, without parental consent or a court order, to help with school transfer and enrollment, compile the child’s education summary, and conduct case management. Furthermore, the students in foster care are assigned a school district foster care liaison who ensures educational placement, enrollment, check-outs from school, and transfer of grades, credits, and records during school changes. CAL Edc Code §48853.5(d)(7)(C) states that the liaison is also someone who has access to all of the child’s records. Unfortunately, there is no current educational law that indicates a teacher’s ability to gain access to background information about the student in foster care.

**Knowledge about Policies**

Education Law AB 490 states that educators, social workers, probation officers, caretakers, advocates, and juvenile courts must work together to serve the educational needs of students in foster care [CAL Edc Code §48850(a)(1)]. However, those who work closest with students in foster care report that there is an absence of universal understanding and knowledge of policies within both the child welfare and education systems (Noonan et al., 2012). Questions that arose for workers in both systems included what happens when a student in foster care moves, and who is legally responsible for signing important documents.

**Placement change.** Sullivan, et al. (2010) suggested that if a change in home placement occurs, the child benefits best from being placed in a home that is in close proximity to their current school of attendance. This helps to ensure that the child continues to have familiarity of his/her educational environment, and can continue
developing peer relations. This research is consistent with current California Education Law which states that the placing agency must promote educational stability by considering a placements’ proximity to the child’s “school of origin” (the student’s current school), attendance area, the number of previous school transfers, and the school matriculation schedule, among other factors [CAL WIC CODE §16501.1(c)]. AB 490 also states that a child’s grades may not be lowered due to absences caused by a change in placement, a court appearance, or a court ordered activity [CAL Edc Code §49069.5(g)-(h)].

The frequency of placement change is dependent on several different factors. First, the duration of time spent in foster care has been associated with the child’s age of entry into the system (Wulcyzn, Hislop, & Harden, 2002). The younger a child is when placed into the foster care system, the longer duration they will spend in foster care. As a result of being in the foster care system for a long duration, the child will be more likely to experience a placement change. Hence, the importance of knowing how current California Education Law aids in supporting these transitions.

**Educational rights.** Determining who signs off on important, decision-making, documents is a point of contention among staff in schools. Per California Education Law, a signature from the adult who holds educational rights is required when a student is going to be evaluated for disabilities. The holder of educational rights also has a role in deciding whether the child will remain in his or her “school of origin” after a residential placement change. In cases where the juvenile court limits educational rights of a parent or guardian, an educational representative will be appointed to hold educational rights for
the student [CAL Rules of Court 5.502(13), 5.650(b)]. At age eighteen, students hold their own educational rights, unless otherwise noted by the court [CAL Edc Code §§49061(a), 560415]. Signatures of parents or guardians who hold educational rights cannot be substituted for the signature of a parent or guardian with parental rights.

The importance of being knowledgeable about education rights is highlighted within a quote from a teacher in the Zetlin et al. (2012) study:

No one seems to care that the guardian may not have educational rights. Most people assume that because they have parental rights it automatically includes ed rights. Therefore we have always had the foster parent sign the IEP. Only one time have I had the social worker say that we needed to have the actual parent sign the IEP because the foster parent did not have ed rights and the social worker took it upon herself to both alert the school of this and get the parent’s signature. I always have the guardian sign the IEP even though they may not be the person with ed rights. I don’t know who has educational rights; no one ever tells me this or discusses this. I have high school students and many times the foster parent has been signing the IEP for years so I just go with it. Basically, I have become jaded by all of the bureaucratic hurdles and I just want to help the child and get them services. (pg.10)
Risk Factors

Zetlin et al. (2010) and Noonan et al. (2012) report teacher concerns regarding how to meet the needs of students in foster care. Current research suggests that the existing difficulty occurs as a result of teachers’ lack of awareness about risk factors, and knowledge-base of how to support the behavioral, social and emotional issues that students in foster care display at school. The following section will discuss common risk factors associated with students in foster care. Risk factors are divided into behavioral, social-emotional, and academic issues.

Behavioral Issues

Focus groups in the Zetlin et al. (2010) study reported behavior to be the area of greatest challenge for general and special education teachers who work with students in foster care. Behavioral health-related services are also reported to be an area of limited knowledge among those who work with students in foster care (Noonan et al, 2012). Limitations in gaining access to appropriate support services that address behavioral issues was also mentioned. Zetlin, et al. (2010) reported that teachers observed the following common behaviors displayed by students in foster care: explosive and unpredictable aggressive behaviors (tantrums, hitting, screaming, and kicking) and hyperactivity. Behaviors were reported to become more variable after a weekend wherein the student was intended to visit their biological parent(s). The presence of externalizing behaviors at school demonstrates the need to promote general awareness of common externalizing disorders and behaviors exhibited by students in foster care.
Data from Casey Family Programs identifies the most common lifetime diagnoses among a sample of 188 fourteen to seventeen-year-old children in the foster care system (Pecora, 2012). The most common externalizing disorders found among this sample included Oppositional Defiant Disorder [29.3%], Conduct Disorder [20.7%], and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) [15.1%]. Consistent with Casey Family Programs’ high rates of AD/HD, teachers in the Zetlin et al. (2010) study noted hyperactivity and inattention as common behaviors displayed by students in foster care. Furthermore, teachers noted aggressive behaviors as a commonly displayed behavior by students in foster care. This is consistent with Casey Family Programs’ high rates of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD), both of which are characterized by high levels of under socialized or socialized aggression. High levels of comorbidity among ODD, CD and AD/HD exist (Merrell, 2009). These externalizing disorders, and associated characteristics, are prevalent among students in foster care and should be monitored closely by school staff.

Zetlin et al. (2010) identified teacher concern surrounding substance use, which tends to be prevalent among the foster care population. A study by Braciszewski and Stout (2012) found that children in the foster care system are likely to use alcohol or marijuana on average 1.5 years earlier than their peers. Furthermore, they found that 54% of youth in foster family homes had used alcohol at least once in their life, and nearly half (41%) had used marijuana. High rates of hard drugs over the lifetime, include hallucinogens (13.5%), stimulants (12.1%), non-street opiates (9.8%), and powder (5.5%) and crack cocaine (5.2%), were also reported. The findings of this study suggest that
children in foster care are at higher risk for engaging in drug use, than children who are not in foster care.

There are identified protective factors that help reduce the likelihood that a student in foster care will engage in substance use. In cases where a child is removed from their biological parent(s), it is optimal for the child to remain in their home of origin during their time in the foster care system. This serves as a protective factor for a child engaging in substance use (Traube, James, Zhang, & Landsverk, 2012). A protective factor against tobacco and/or alcohol used is a sense of connectedness between the child and the present caregiver. While school staff has limited control over whether or not students remain in their home of origin, or the level of connectedness that student has with their caregiver, teachers may support students by providing them with the opportunity to develop pro-social connections and/or relationships within the school.

With high rates of externalizing disorders among the foster care population, teacher awareness is vital for early identification of developing problems. Students who are in foster care are at risk for engaging in substance use, and due to multiple placement changes, they are often at a disadvantage for developing pro-social connections and/or relationships.

Social-Emotional Issues

Research by Zetlin et al. (2010) reported that the majority of both general and special education teachers described a heightened level of emotional challenges for children in foster care when compared to children who were not in care. Special and general education teachers report that students in foster care display and demonstrate
difficulties facilitating pro-social peer relationships, shutting down, withdrawal, and depression (Zetlin et al. 2010). These social and emotional challenges can present as problematic within the school setting.

Children who are exposed to stressful events are at an increased risk for depression, anxiety and other internalizing issues (Merrell, 2008). Foster care placement, in general, is a stressful event for many children, and research suggests that these children are at-risk for experiencing internal problems. Data from the Casey Family Program identified the following lifetime diagnoses of internalizing disorders among students in foster care: Major Depressive Disorder [19.0%], Major Depressive Episode [19.0%], and Panic Attack [18.9%] (Pecora, 2012). Merrell (2009) identifies several common causes for the development of depressive and anxiety disorders, with the latter being linked to the identified panic attacks in the Casey Family Program study. Among these causes are experiencing the loss of a loved one, which includes losing a parent, or experiencing a family separation, all of which can lead to depressive disorders. With regard to depressive disorders, Barth et al. (2007) reported that children in foster care who experienced depression were 32% more likely to also experience a placement change. With regard to anxiety disorders, children who are unable to develop a healthy attachment pattern with their parents are at increased risk for anxiety.

Teachers’ awareness of internalizing disorders, which are often developing directly after placement into the foster care system (McMillen, et al., 2005), can aid in early identification of internal problems. Children in care experience disruption of family, friends, and community ties, along with emotional trauma due to abuse or loss.
Separation from one’s family paired with foster care placement, often results in negative emotional outcomes for children within the foster care system and should be considered when working with this population.

A study by Villegas and Pecora (2012) identified maltreatment as being a predictor of mental health issues. A common form of maltreatment among students in foster care is sexual abuse. Students who are exposed to sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment and neglect are at higher risk for developing internalizing problems (Pears, Kim, & Fisher, 2008). Auslander, Edmond, Elize, McMillen, & Thompson (2002) compared 190 adolescent girls in the foster care system that had experienced sexual abuse, with those that did not experience sexual abuse. In the study, high rates of withdrawal, somatic complaints, and anxiety/depression were reported among 54% of the sample, all of whom met criteria for being sexually abused. The authors reported that girls who lived in a group home or residential center were at greater risk of being sexually abused, while placement within a family home decreases the risk of sexual abuse and can generate more structure and support in the child’s life. Whether or not a child resides in a group home or residential center should be taken into consideration when a student is identified as being in foster care.

Understanding that students in foster care struggle with developing pro-social relationships is important because students who exhibit poor social relationships are at higher risk for developing depression, or perhaps are already depressed. In addition, Sullivan, et al. (2010), reported that emotional problems may impede this population from obtaining the skills needed to engage pro-socially with their peers. Children who
self-isolate or withdraw from the company of others may be displaying characteristics of depression or social anxiety (Merrell, 2008). Identification of these types of social and emotional issues is relevant, given the high prevalence of mental health problems that exist for children within the foster care system (Oswald, Heil & Goldbeck, 2009).

The need for teachers to be aware of the symptoms and characteristics of mental health problems is needed in order to better identify and provide them with the support necessary for them to be successful socially and emotionally.

**Academic Issues**

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2010), or TCFTL reports that, when compared to the general population, students in foster care have been given minimal opportunities to be successful in school. This is in part due to the frequent placement changes that can occur within the home or school setting. The frequency of school or home placement change affects the naturally occurring continuity in the school setting, thus influencing the student’s approach to school. TCFTL (2010) describes students in foster care as being cautious and having low expectations when entering a new classroom. Sullivan et al. (2010) reported that students in foster care, who develop a negative perspective towards school, may develop an under-investment in their education and the resources available to them at their current school placement. An unstable placement is the underlying cause for this frame of thought among children in care.

Placement change can negatively impact a student’s ability to obtain optimal educational achievement. About 37% to 55% of youth in foster care graduate from high school, which is significantly lower than the general population. Students in foster care
tend to have a higher rate of grade retention, which is a strong predictor for dropping out of school (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2011). It is reported that it takes about 4 to 6 months for children in foster care to recover academically after transferring schools (Emerson & Lovitt, 2003). Zetlin et al. (2010) noted that students in foster care are reported to be performing below grade-level in all academic areas.

The increased social, emotional, academic and behavioral risk for students in foster care warrants the need for early intervention support services. Students in foster care are reported to experience externalizing and/or internalizing behaviors which may hinder the student’s ability to develop a relationship with peers and teachers, impede their learning and place them at-risk for substance abuse. Teachers have reported that they do not have the knowledge of how best to support students in foster care. Therefore, it is important that teachers be introduced to evidence-based support services that can be easily implemented in the classroom.

**Support Services**

The following are evidence-based support services that can address the needs of students in foster care: prosocial relationships, school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS/PBIS), alternatives to suspension, and the buddy system, and bibliotherapy. These supports address the internal, external and academic struggles that many students in foster care face. By introducing teachers to effective support services, students’ problem areas can be targeted and developing symptoms may be reduced.
Prosocial Relationships

Current research suggests that building a positive relationship with a caregiver provides a strong level of support for children in foster care. Hemphill and Hargreaves (2009) found that children who were able to form an attachment with their biological mother were least likely to engage in antisocial behaviors such as drinking, getting high, stealing, or selling drugs. The caregiver relationship provides ongoing coaching, training, and support to children. However, there are many cases in which children in foster care are unable to form an attachment due to early age entrance into the foster care system. While some children in foster care receive services from independent living programs, many go without access to anyone who can provide guidance throughout their lives (Pecora, 2012). Research by Traube et al. (2012) supports the benefits of maintaining a connection to a caregiver, or other positive pro-social relationship. This connection is said to serve as a protective factor for children in foster care.

A direct connection with a caregiver is significantly challenging for the child in foster care, and often the connection cannot be made. In these cases, researchers suggest that positive adult connections be fostered and promoted within the school system. The need for this connection is vital, considering the challenges students in foster care face when developing relationships. It has been reported that students in foster care are less likely to develop friends as a result of frequent school changes (Fong, Schwab & Armour, 2006). In addition to school placement changes, residential placement changes can also make it difficult for children in foster care to develop social relationships (Ward, 2011). In a study conducted by Ward, 59% of children in the sample experienced three or more
home placements, and 22% experienced six or more home placement changes within 3.5 years. The instability within the living environment, ultimately results in a lack of consistent pro-social relationships (Harden, 2004).

The development of pro-social relationships is further supported in a study by Healey and Fischer (2011) who reported that teacher-child relationships during kindergarten played a key role in academic and behavioral outcomes for the child in foster care. This research further suggests the importance of developing caring and stable adult relationships between teachers and children in foster care. During the times when a child in care is experiencing multiple school placement changes, and guardianship changes, the building of this relationship is most important.

The TCFTL (2010), conducted a study wherein students in foster care were paired with a caring adult who worked at the school, such as a teacher, coach, or parent volunteers, who checked in with the child throughout the school year. Teachers reported that building a trusting relationship with students in foster care was one of the first steps to impacting the student’s level of academic effort and willingness to please their teachers. Providing classroom supports for students in foster care may help ease a transition into a new school.

It was reported that a lack of attachment between a child and his/her caregiver(s) can lead to problematic outcomes. For example, a child may become overly vigilant and develop a connection with every adult, or not develop an attachment with any adult. Children who lack the ability to form attachments or form unhealthy attachments may also have difficulty developing relationships with peers (Harden, 2004). The attachment
between a child and a caregiver is an essential component for predicting the child’s ability to develop an attachment with others. The pro-social relationships that youth develop at school provides a buffer for the risk factors they encounter (Sullivan et al., 2010). Promoting and supporting positive social interactions and pro-social relationships are essential for students in foster care.

Research by Johnson, Pryce, and Martinovich (2011) reports the effectiveness of therapeutic mentoring among children in the care system. The System of Care (SOC), a short-term crisis intervention service program, was utilized to conduct the study. Children receiving therapeutic mentoring showed significant improvements in family and social functioning, school behavior, and engagement in recreational activities within the first six months of the program. Children receiving therapeutic mentoring over the course of 12-18 months showed a significant decline in symptoms of traumatic stress. Therapeutic mentoring can be used for enhancing treatment interventions, and should be considered by teachers for students in foster care. While teachers may not be trained at the level of SOC mentors, the study suggests that a level of mentoring and guidance can help to support students in foster care.

Hedin, Hojer, and Brunnberg (2010) introduced a method that schools could use in order to help the child in foster care develop pro-social relationships along with developing the child’s self-esteem. They reported that children in foster care who participated in school-based activities had the opportunity to engage with their peers and develop their social skills as well as their talents (i.e., sports, dancing). Both their social skills and talents could then be used in their new school environment if and when a new
school placement occurs. Participation in extracurricular activities is associated with self-esteem, including positive self-image and resiliency (Kort-Butler and Hagewen, 2011). As reported by TCFTL (2010), providing students the opportunity to participate in school activities outside of the classroom helps connect students in foster care to the school community and allows them to interact with peers and adults.

**Buddy System**

The TCFTL (2010) suggested that a buddy system be used in the classroom in order to provide children in foster care with support. The buddy system entails pairing the student in foster care with a classmate so that they can complete class assignments together. For those students experiencing academic difficulties, this approach allows a student to utilize a peer to answer questions, obtain clarification, and/or model positive work/study habits. It is essential that teachers are aware of the academic difficulties students in foster care experience in order to target areas of need.

The buddy system also functions as a way to develop peer relationships. It provides the student in foster care with a sense of belonging and social support, particularly when a student has experienced a recent placement change (TCFTL, 2010).

**School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports**

Monitoring and addressing internal and external behaviors among the foster population can be facilitated through the use of PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) or SWPBIS (School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). SWPBIS is a three-tiered intervention model that provides different levels of interventions and supports that promote pro-social behaviors across settings. A study by
Ross, Romer, and Horner (2011) found that regardless of the school’s socioeconomic status, teachers who implemented PBIS with fidelity experienced lower levels of burn out rate and increased levels of efficacy. In addition, through PBIS, school staff is able to learn how to effectively teach and reinforce appropriate behavior, discourage inappropriate behavior, monitor students, and monitor and track data in order to make decisions. As a result of these effective practices, teachers can collaboratively address problem behaviors on a school-wide level.

The use of social-emotional curricula at the tier 1 level of support, helps to address and identify external and internal problems among students, and can be facilitated directly by teachers. Many social-emotional curricula teach students the necessary social skills needed for school success. Merrell, Juskelis, Tran, and Buchanan (2008) conducted three pilot studies that looked at the effects of Strong Kids and Strong Teens social-emotional curricula. The first pilot consisted of elementary students in the general education setting, the second consisted of middle school students in the general education setting, and the third consisted of high school students in the special education setting who had been identified as having emotional-behavioral disorders. The appropriate curriculum was used for each pilot study and was implemented once per week for twelve weeks. The curriculum focused on increasing students’ knowledge of what healthy social emotional behavior is, and decreasing symptoms of negative affect and distress. The study found statistically significant results for all three pilot studies, suggesting that the Strong Kids/Strong Teens curriculum is valid school-wide intervention. Given the high levels of reported internalizing behaviors among the foster
care population, social-emotional curriculum could be a vessel for delivering additional support and resources to these students. This intervention is unique in that it is delivered to all students, and helps to prevent a student in foster care from being singled out.

**Alternatives to Suspensions**

In the cases where PBIS does not specifically reduce externalizing problems, children in foster care run an increased risk of becoming suspended from school. Suspensions are defined as a short-term removal from school [CAL Edc Code§48925(d)]. Typically, display of serious behaviors, in which the safety of the student, peers or staff is threatened, will elicit a suspension. In addition non-threatening behaviors such as talking back to the teacher or disrupting the classroom could also result in a suspension (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009).

Research suggests that a plethora of negative outcomes are associated with school suspensions. Hemphill and Hargreaves (2009) conducted a study that found that students who were suspended were 50% more likely to engage in antisocial behavior and 70% more likely to engage in violent behavior 12 months after being suspended. School suspensions are also associated with an increased risk in delinquency, and the longer the duration in foster care, the greater the likelihood that the child will be suspended or expelled from school (Ryan, Testa & Zhai, 2008). Other negative outcomes for a student who is suspended may include academic difficulties due to missing out on instructional time, feelings of school isolation, dropping out of school, engaging in criminal acts and delinquency, and/or engaging in alcohol and drug use (Hemphill & Hargreaves).
Risk-factors may be lowered for students in foster care when alternatives to suspension are considered. A school district can opt to use alternatives to suspension and expulsion, such as counseling, anger-management programs, and community service during non-school hours [CAL Edc Code §§48900(v), 48900.6]. Choosing an alternative to suspension, may serve as a way to help limit further exposure to risk factors for students in foster care and should therefore be considered by school staff.

**Bibliotherapy**

The use of literature as a means for therapeutic intervention has been a growing area of interest for mental health professionals. Research by Cook-Cottone (2004) identified positive effects of using bibliotherapy for children who have previously experienced a form of abuse. Due to the high prevalence rates of abuse in foster youth, the positive effects of bibliotherapy may be generalized to foster youth who have also endured similar experiences. Due to a lack of foster youth representation in today’s media, this population may find it difficult to identify with characters that are like them (Baker, 2007). As a result, foster children often experience feelings of isolation and shame. Bibliotherapy is one of the few media outlets that promote normalization of a foster child’s unique experience. Furthermore, it helps to debunk myths that suggest foster children are “outcasts”, or lack a sense of belonging in society. Bibliotherapy provides a starting point for possible dialogue with a student, whom may need a non-directive approach to addressing issues related with this sensitive topic.

The use of children’s literature as a tool for facilitating emotional growth and healing is highly appropriate for children in foster care. The stories provide different
perspectives, and allow endless opportunities for children to explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. When the literature is used in a therapeutic manner, children often gain insight about their lives and learn proactive ways to approach adversity. Bibliotherapy provides an opportunity for the student to identify with a protagonist who is experiencing a similar situation and/or challenge as they are. Through this outsider perspective, foster children can gain better understanding about their situation and learn how to better cope with being in foster care. The transference of the protagonist onto the reader also allows foster children to explore and express their feelings associated with being a foster youth. Through this technique, foster children are allowed an opportunity to become the “expert” on foster care situations. Children may draw their own experiences to answer how the protagonist will prevail. Furthermore, children in foster care may identify problem solving strategies and identify positive coping skills for the characters involved (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, Money, 2005).

Cushner (2009) states that using literature to explore sensitive topics such as foster care is a useful tool when working with students in foster care. Cushner further goes on to explain that literature helps separate the person from the specific issue. This can be a powerful tool especially for foster children who may be unable to identify with previous traumas and situations. In addition, literature can be used to elicit creative expression. Bibliotherapy in a classroom setting is encouraged among elementary schools. Books about foster homes should be used and available in elementary school classrooms. This promotes an all inclusive classroom environment in which foster youth can feel represented and included (McKellar, 2007).
Bibliotherapy addresses social and emotional challenges that are unique to the lifestyle of a child in foster care, in a safe and therapeutic manner. Based on the aforementioned information, bibliotherapy with children in foster care can facilitate open discussion of an otherwise sensitive topic and situation, and help children in foster care to better understand and cope during a trying time in their lives.

**Conclusion**

Research suggests that teachers are in need of more information about the logistics of working with students in foster care, the risk factors, and available support services that can be used to address the unique needs of students in foster care. By presenting current California Educational Code to teachers at large, it is hoped that there can be more effective communication among the educational system and child welfare system. A large body of current research emphasizes that children in foster care have significant academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. Addressing the need for support services by informing teachers of risk-factors associated with this population, as well as presenting available evidence-based support services, allows teachers to become more knowledgeable and confident in their abilities when working with the foster care population. By providing a workshop that informs teachers’ practice when working with students in foster care, this population can be better served within the educational system.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research

The authors’ initial aim for research focused on identifying risk factors and support services for children in foster care. However, as the research process went on it was found that informing teachers about the identification process, how to obtain background information and education code as it relates to students in foster care was also an area of need.

Several techniques were used to research this project. The ERIC and Academic Search Premier databases were used to search for journal articles. The key word “foster care” was used in combination with other terms such as “transitions” and “placement change.” Additional information was gathered from the references cited within articles, as well from websites such as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting website. Workshops attended at the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2013 conference provided the authors with information about how to work with students who have experienced trauma, and a new perspective to school suspensions. Published documents from Elk Grove Unified School District were utilized to serve as a foundation for best practices and legal responsibility when working with students in foster care. The information gathered was categorized into specific sections (i.e. internalizing behaviors). Each author was assigned specific sections to write for the literature review.
Development of the Research Project

The workshop presentation is designed to provide teachers with information and clarification about common cross-system communication breakdowns that occur when working with children in foster care. This includes how to identify a student who is in foster care, obtaining basic background information about a student, and California Education Code. The workshop will introduce teachers to the risk factors associated with students in foster care, and tools that teachers can use in the classroom setting to address areas of concern. The presentation will include practical application throughout the support service section, wherein teachers will identify what risk-factors would prompt the need to utilize a service. The purpose of the interactive activities is so that attendees have an opportunity to practice, and to generate questions about the workshop information. The PowerPoint presentation and notes is located in Appendix A, and the Presenter’s Manual is located in Appendix B of this project. A Foster Care Resource Packet for teachers is included in Appendix C.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The information obtained from the Literature Review was used to compose a training workshop for school teachers. The workshop is to be delivered in a four hour time frame. The PowerPoint presentation and Presenter’s Manual, along with the Foster Care Resource Packet are included in the project’s appendix. The training workshop is intended to help teachers gain an understanding of the risk factors students in foster care are likely to experience, support services, and clarification about identifying and obtaining background information, California Education Code, and cross-system communication.

Workshop Objective

The verbal presentation should include staff-friendly language, audience participation and handouts to assist in the discussion of the main topics. The primary focus is to provide staff with information needed to identify and support students in foster care in the school setting.

Recommendations

It is recommended that school teachers view the contents of this project as being aligned with current research-based practices, California Education Code, and policies. Over time, practices, law, and policies can change. Thus, it is important that school staff adapt or modify content in order to be up to date with current research, law, and policy in order to meet the needs of each school setting. Furthermore, teachers may need to adapt or modify support services to align with school site or school district resources. It is important to implement changes to support services in a way that will not compromise the integrity of the recommended support.
Conclusion

School age students in foster care have increased risk factors when compared to students who are not in foster care. These risk factors can negatively impact school functioning. Currently, the needs of these students may not be met by teachers, due to a lack of knowledge regarding how to serve and support this population. The current training workshop addresses these and other pertinent areas of concern. In evaluation of this project, it is hoped that teachers acquire the necessary knowledge base to support behavioral, social, emotional and academic needs for students in foster care. In addition, it is hoped that teachers will gain a clear understanding of current California Education Code and policies as it pertains to working with students in foster care.
APPENDIX A

Presenter’s Manual
Presenter’s Manual

Created by Melissa Fumiyo Ponce and Vanessa Romo
Introduction

For staff to meet the needs of students in foster care they must have knowledge of laws, risk factors and evidence-based support services. Students in foster care are at greater risk for experiencing internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and academic difficulties. For this reason, it is imperative that staff have the understanding and tools available to provide behavioral, social-emotional, and/or academic supports when needed.

This Presenter’s Manual, accompanying PowerPoint presentation and slide notes, and Foster Care Resource Packet are designed to educate staff about the laws, risk factors and evidence-based support services regarding students in foster care. The information is based on a literature review compiled September through December 2012.

Nature of the Presentation

The presentation is designed for an audience of teachers who work with students in foster care within the classroom and/or school setting. The presentation is designed to last four hours. Audience participation is an integral part of the presentation. The audience is presented with general knowledge regarding foster care laws and policies, foster care risk factors and support services, all of which can be utilized by teachers. Presenters must use presentation techniques such as pausing for questions, demonstrating active listening, being sensitive when presenting information, and validating audience input. Prior to beginning the workshop, the presenters will need to make copies of the PowerPoint presentation and slide notes, handouts (located at the end of this manual), and
Foster Care Resource Packet. The PowerPoint presentation and slide notes, and Foster Care Resource Packet are available on a CD at the end of this manual.

In preparation for the workshop, presenters should read over the PowerPoint presentation and accompanying slide notes. Presenters may add their names to the initial slide. It is recommended that the presenters become familiar with the resources and references cited in the PowerPoint. The presenters should be prepared to answer audience member questions that are not directly answered in the PowerPoint or slide notes.

**Guidance for Presenters**

This workshop is presented as a series of Microsoft PowerPoint slides. The slides contain all the essential information necessary for presenting the workshop. The presenters may use their own language when presenting; however, sample language has been provided in italics in the slide notes. When indicated to “read”, it is recommended that the presenter read the indicated information on the slide verbatim.

The workshop is also designed to include participation from the audience. Careful consideration should be taken when the presenter encounters “Note to presenter(s)”.

These notes may caution the presenter to anticipate an audience reaction, or to be sensitive to the audience. It is recommended that the presenter(s) provide the audience with facial tissue, due to the emotionally charged discussions that may occur. When the presenter encounters “Resources for the presenter(s)”, they will be presented with additional resources as it pertains to the topic being discussed. Questions and practical applications are included in the slide notes. In the slide notes the questions are prompted under “Ask.”
The presentation may be performed by one or more presenters. There are no firm rules regarding which sections each presenter should present.

A recommended timeline for the workshop follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slides</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1-6</td>
<td>Introduction and Outline</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7-26</td>
<td>Common Breakdowns in Cross-System Communication</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#27-53</td>
<td>Risk Factors</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#54-106</td>
<td>Evidence-based support services</td>
<td>120 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About the Authors**

Melissa Ponce and Vanessa Romo are school psychologist interns. They both have completed their Masters degrees at California State University, Sacramento. This workshop was completed to satisfy part of the requirements of their Specialist in Education (Ed.S.) degrees.
### Abuse & Warning Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Abuse</th>
<th>Warning signs</th>
<th>What did you do?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Physical abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Emotional abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
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</table>
### Worksheet

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Presenting problem/risk factor</th>
<th>Ideas for supporting this student</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Presenter’s Slides
Sample Language:
An important subgroup of students that you work with are children in the foster care system. Teachers are often stressed by the limited information that is provided about these students. You may have a student in your classroom and not learn that they are in foster care until a much later time. You may know that a student is in foster care, but you can’t obtain any information about them. Lastly, you may see a child in foster care experiencing some serious social and/or emotional problems and may not know what you can do to support them. This workshop is aimed to address these concerns and more, so that teachers can feel more comfortable working with and supporting this population.
Ask:
What is foster care? (Rhetorical)

Sample Language:
Foster care refers to a child who has been removed from the custody of their biological parents and moved to an out-of-home placement due to safety concerns, a serious parent-child conflict, or to treat serious behavioral or health conditions that cannot be met by the family. A child in foster care may reside in a relative’s home, foster family’s home, treatment foster home, or group/residential home.
There are over 400,000 children in foster care. 47% of which are placed in a non-relative foster family home. 27% are placed in a relative foster family home. The average age of a child in foster care is 9 years, 3 months, and the average months spent in foster care are 23. These statistics suggest that the likelihood that a child in foster care is of school-age is relatively high.

If the audience inquires about additional statistical information, please refer to the Foster Care Resource Packet (FCRP) in the appendix.
Sample Language:
A study, in which stakeholders from the child welfare and education systems discussed difficulties with cross-system communication, reported the following: 1) A lack of awareness surrounding basic policies, 2) An absence of universal understanding and knowledge of policies, and 3) Limitations in gaining access to appropriate support services that address behavioral issues.

Ask:
Do you agree with the aforementioned teacher concerns?

Ask:
What would you like to know more about when working with children in foster care?

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.
General and Special Education teachers in their last year of graduate school reported the following surrounding working with children in foster care:

- Behavior is reported to be the area of greatest challenge
- Teacher’s report concerns about the prevalence of substance use among children in foster care
- The majority of both general and special education teachers described a heightened level of emotional challenges for children in foster care, when compared to children who were not in care
- Students in foster care are reported to display difficulties facilitating pro-social peer relationships, shutting down, withdrawal, and depression
- Special and general education teachers report a need for in-service trainings or workshops that target how to best support the foster care population

Zetlin et al. (2010)

Sample Language:

*General and special education teachers in their last year of graduate school reported their experiences working with the foster care population. It was reported that behavior was the greatest area of challenge teachers experienced. Particular concern about the prevalence of substance use among children in foster care was noted. In addition to behavioral concerns, teachers also reported social and emotional challenges among students in foster care. Lastly, teachers reported feeling ill-equipped to work with this population and indicated the need for in-service trainings to target how to best support these students.*

Ask:

*What are your concerns and/or reservations in working with children in foster care? Do you share the same concerns or different concerns?*

Note to the presenter(s):

*Encourage responses and open dialogue.*
I. Common breakdowns in cross-system communication
   - Identifying students in foster care
   - Basic background information
   - Knowledge about policies-California Education Code (CEC)

II. Risk Factors
   - Trauma & Abuse
   - Externalizing Problems
   - Internalizing Problems
   - Academic Problems

III. Evidence-based support services
   - School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (SWPBIS/PBIS)
   - Suspension Alternatives
   - Pro-social Relationships
   - Buddy system
   - Bibliotherapy

Sample Language:
This workshop is intended to be interactive. Please feel free to ask questions, draw from personal experience, and make comments throughout the presentation. Today I/we will address the common breakdowns in communication that occur between the child welfare system and the education system. Within this section I/we will talk about how to identify a student in foster care, how to obtain background information about a student in foster care, and the California Education Code related to working with a student in foster care. Section two will look at trauma and abuse that students in foster care may encounter. External, internal, and academic risk factors will also be introduced. The last section will focus on ways in which teachers can support this population using evidence-based practices.
I. Common Breakdowns in Cross-System Communication

Sample Language:
*The first section is cross-system communication.*
Cross-system communication refers to the barriers in communication that occur among the major systems involved in the life of a child in foster care; the child welfare system and the educational system.

Noonan, et al. (2012)

Sample Language:
Cross-system communication refers to the barriers in communication that occur among the major systems involved in the life of a child in foster care; the child welfare system and the educational system. Each system holds vital information about the student; yet, the information is often not shared freely due to policies/laws, and/or a misunderstanding about policies/laws. There is an absence of universal understanding and knowledge of policies within both the child welfare and education systems (Noonan et al., 2012).
Sample Language:

*In order to provide support to children in foster care, we must first identify which students are currently placed in foster care. At that point, we can try to accumulate background information on the student. Furthermore, it is vital that educators understand current California Education Code and policies, as it pertains to this population.*
Sample Language:
There are no formal methods to identify which students are in foster care. Typically, teachers and staff learn that a student is in foster care through self-disclosure or through journal writings and/or class writing assignments. While special education teachers are more likely than a general education teacher to identify a student in foster care via the CUM file, due to placement changes, access to the CUM file is not always guaranteed.

Ask:
Reflecting on your experiences, how have you identified that a student was placed in foster care?

Sample Language:
With no formal methods in place to identify which students are in foster care, teachers should be vigilant about looking for indicators that suggest a student could be in foster care. Later in this workshop, risk factors will be reviewed. Having knowledge about and identifying risk factors may aid in the identification of students in foster care.

Note to Presenter(s):
Consider who your audience is. The lens in which students in foster care are viewed may differ among general education and special education teachers.
Identifying Students in Foster Care Continued

- In some districts, the district’s electronic database will indicate if a student is in foster care.

- You may ask your school district’s Foster Care (FC) Liaison to assist you in identifying if a student is in foster care.

Parker and Otterson (2013)

Sample Language:

Some districts utilize electronic databases that provide information about a student. Elk Grove Unified School District utilizes an electronic database called SISWeb. Within the database, it will indicate whether or not the student is in foster care. Frequent updates occur on a regular basis to provide the most accurate information about a student’s status. When access to an electronic database is unavailable, you may locate your district’s FC liaison to assist you in identifying if a student is in foster care. We will talk further about the FC Liaison and their role in a moment.

Ask:

By a show of hands, who has heard of a foster care liaison before?
Sample Language:

In some cases information about a child in foster care will be disclosed, but often it is after the child is already experiencing an extreme challenge, or an emergency situation has arisen. Instead of receiving information right away, child care workers often receive information after problems or incidents have already emerged and developed. This makes it difficult to provide support and/or services to the student.
Sample Language:
Per California Education Code, social workers and probation officers may access school records without parental consent or a court order, so long as it is to assist with educational needs. The FC liaison also has access to records. Unfortunately, there is no current educational law that indicates a teacher’s ability to gain access to background information on the student in foster care. However, there are ways in which a teacher or staff member can gain more information. Foster care liaisons may be a good resource for information, as they are responsible for more specific educational needs such as educational placements and grade transfers.

Read:
Second bullet point only.
Sample Language:

Contacting the student in foster care’s social worker and/or attorney is a great way to obtain information about a student. The district’s electronic data base will often provide the social workers name and contact information. In the event that an electronic data base is unavailable, contact your district’s FC liaison for contact information. When speaking with a child’s social worker and/or attorney, a signed release of information is not necessary in order to exchange information. While some child welfare workers will disclose information, some may choose to be more restrictive about the information that is released. Often, the latter occurs because the child welfare worker does not want to stigmatize the student, and risk them being treated differently. Nonetheless, opening up the communication lines between the education and child welfare systems bridges the breakdown that often occurs between these systems. Even if a conversation is one-sided, the more information you provide the child welfare worker, the more in tune they will be with the case. This open communication helps target problems before they have reached their peak.
Sample Language:
While there are many policies that pertain to students in foster care, this workshop will review four. Becoming familiar with California Education Codes will build understanding and knowledge about working with students in foster care.
Sample Language:
Assembly Bill 490 states that all foster care stakeholders shall work together in order to maintain stable school placements within the least restrictive educational programs, and to provide students with access to necessary academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all other students. AB490 states that a student can remain in their school of origin for the duration of the school year when a placement change occurs. Home placements are to be proximal to the student’s current school, and a timely transfer of school records must occur. Immediate enrollment must also occur, even when school records, immunizations, and school uniforms are unavailable. Absences due to placement changes are not counted against the student, and credit for full or partial coursework is calculated and accepted by the receiving school. This bill focuses on building stability in an unstable situation.

Resources for the presenter(s):
For additional information and details about AB490, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Sample Language:
AB 167 allows for students in the 11th or 12th grade to obtain minimum credits in order to graduate, when they experience a school placement change. So, if a student in the 11th or 12th grade is transferred to a new school, they will only have to obtain 140 credits in order to graduate. This allows for students to graduate early, as 140 credits is not difficult to obtain in the 11th/12th grade year. Currently, new legislation is working to add in a 4 year attendance policy to this assembly bill. This will help prevent students from graduating early.

Ask:
In what ways is this assembly bill helpful/not helpful?

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.

Resources for the presenter(s):
For additional information and details about AB167, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
### AB12: Extended foster care services

**AB12**
- Provides foster care services for eligible youth beyond age 18 and, at full implementation, up until the age of 21.
- In these cases, the student would sign off on a document that indicates that they are a dependent. School staff develops a program that is implemented at a continuation school.

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**Sample Language:**

*AB12 allows for students in foster care to extend their time in the education system, up to age 21. In these cases, a student will sign off on a document that indicates that they are still a dependent, and that they will follow a particular plan that will be implemented at a continuation school.*

**Ask:**

*In what ways is this assembly bill helpful/not helpful?*

**Note to the presenter(s):**

Encourage responses and open dialogue.

**Resources for the presenter(s):**

For additional information and details about AB12, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
The foster child’s attorney and the appropriate representative of the county child welfare agency are to be notified of pending expulsion proceedings.

Read:
Title and bullet points.

Ask:
In what ways is this assembly bill helpful for students in foster care?

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.

Sample Language:
While firm definitions of what elicits a suspension or expulsion exists, each school site may interpret that definition differently. This assembly bill is especially important for students in foster care, who are at-risk for behavioral problems. The child’s attorney and holder of educational rights must be present at expulsion hearings.

Resources for the presenter(s):
For additional information and details about AB1909, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Per California Education Law, a signature from the adult who holds educational rights is required when a student is going to be evaluated for a disability or an educational decision is being made for that child. CAL Rules of Court 5.502(13), 5.650(b)

Sample Language:
When working with students in foster care, who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), it is vital that the person who holds educational rights is identified.

Read:
Bullet point.

Ask:
*How do you identify who is the holder of educational rights?*

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.

Sample Language:
*This can be difficult to do when a child is transitioning through the system. A form that indicates who the holder of educational rights will sometimes be located within the child’s cumulative (CUM) file. Contacting the foster care liaison, social worker, attorney, or foster parent directly, may assist you in identifying who’s holds educational rights.*
No one seems to care that the guardian may not have educational rights. Most people assume that because they have parental rights it automatically includes ed rights. Therefore, we have always had the foster parent sign the IEP. Only one time have I had the social worker say that we needed to have the actual parent sign the IEP because the foster parent did not have ed rights and the social worker took it upon herself to both alert the school of this and get the parent's signature. I always have the guardian sign the IEP even though they may not be the person with ed rights. I don’t know who has educational rights, no one ever tells me this or discusses this. I have high school students and many times the foster parent has been signing the IEP for years so I just go with it. Basically, I have become jaded by all of the bureaucratic hurdles and I just want to help the child and get them services.”

Zetlin et al. (2012)

Note to presenter(s):
Be sensitive, due to the possibility that teachers in the audience may know someone who misunderstood the law, or have engaged in this misunderstanding of the law first hand. Be prepared to receive an audience reaction, and be prepared to provide support and clarity of the law.

Read:
Title and bullet point.
What if you can’t identify who holds educational rights?

- Contact your district’s FC Liaison.
- Information about who holds educational rights should be listed on the education passport and case plan.
- In cases where the information cannot be found, contact the child’s social worker and/or attorney.
- If educational decision-making rights have not been addressed by the juvenile court, the worker and/or child’s attorney can ask the court to hold a hearing to determine who should hold educational rights.
- If the court limits educational rights and is unable to identify a Responsible Adult to make educational decisions on behalf of the child, and the child is eligible or suspected of being eligible for special education services, the school district must appoint a Surrogate Parent and provide the surrogate’s contact information to the juvenile court through a JV-536 form. GC § 7579.5.

Sample Language:

*When you cannot identify who holds educational rights, contact your district’s FC liaison. The information should be noted on the education passport and case plan for the student. The education passport can be accessed by the FC liaison. You may also contact the child’s social worker and/or attorney. If education decision-making rights have not been addressed by the juvenile court, the social worker and/or child’s attorney can ask the court to hold a hearing to determine who holds educational rights. A surrogate parent will be appointed if the court limits educational rights and is unable to identify a responsible adult to make educational decisions.*
Foster Care Liaison

Educational liaisons in each county are charged with ensuring and facilitating the “proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school of foster children”. EC § 48853.5(b)(1). They assist foster children when transferring schools and ensuring proper transfer of credits, records, and grades. EC 48853.5(b)(2).

In order to fulfill this responsibility, they should develop a protocol and procedure to ensure that they, the district and the school in which foster child are enrolled are aware of who holds the right to make educational decisions for each foster care youth enrolled in the district. EC §§ 51100-51102.

Within two business days of the foster child’s request for enrollment, the school last attended by the foster child must be contacted in order to obtain all academic and other records. The school liaison for the school last attended shall provide all records to the new school within two business days of receiving the request. EC 48853.5(d)(4)(C).

The foster care liaison, in consultation with and the agreement of the foster child and the person holding educational rights for the foster child, may, in accordance with the foster child’s best interests, recommend that the foster child be enrolled in any public school that pupils living in the attendance area in which the foster child resides are eligible to attend. EC 48853.5(d)(2).

Sample Language:

The titles FC Liaison, FC Coordinator, or Educational Liaison are synonymous. Per CEC, the liaison must ensure and facilitate proper educational placement, enrollment, and checkouts from schools. More specifically, they ensure proper transfer of credits, records, and grades. The liaison is responsible for developing and implementing a protocol and procedure that identifies who holds education rights. They are also responsible for making sure that the student’s files and records from the previous school attended are sent to the new school within two business days. The liaison also ensures that the student is enrolled in any public school, of which is in the best interest of the child.

As a result of CEC, the FC liaison holds a lot of information about students in foster care. This is why the FC liaison is your go-to person when you have questions about identification of a student in foster care, background information on a student in foster care, and California Education Codes (CEC).
Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD)
FC Liaison

What does a FC Liaison do?

- Each month Sacramento County of Education (SCOE) provides the Foster Care Liaison with newly identified children in foster care within the district. Within two days of receiving a student in foster care, an educational passport is to be created. The educational passport includes information from the previous district as well as information from the Foster Focus database. This database holds the information of several counties in California and can only be accessed by authorized personnel.

- The FC Liaison will contact the school site registrar and associated program assistants with the new information. The FC Liaison encourages the school site registrar to share the information with school staff, particularly the teachers of the students. EGUSD’s FC Liaison works with 4 program assistants, who are also accessible for information, as well as foster paraeducators.

Sample Language:
Within California there are six district level foster care programs. One exists in EGUSD. Those counties without the program have, at least, a FC liaison. In an interview with Kim Parker, FC Coordinator for EGUSD, she described briefly her role as a liaison. This is not an exhaustive list of her duties or role, but it will provide an overview of what a FC Liaison does.

Each month, SCOE provides the FC liaison with newly identified children in foster care within the district. Within two days of receiving a student in foster care, an educational passport is to be created. The educational passport includes information from the previous district as well as information from the Foster Focus database. This database holds the information of several California counties, and can be accessed by the FC liaison.

The FC liaison will contact the school site registrar and associated program assistants with the new information. She then encourages the registrar to share the information with the school staff; particularly, the teacher of the student in foster care.
Sample Language:
You can contact a FC liaison or program assistant about any foster care questions. While EGUSD indicates no issue with confidentiality, it is important that you contact the liaison in your district to be sure that they follow the same policy; particularly regarding social workers and attorneys. Be careful not to generalize EGUSD’s policy to other districts. Double check with your FC liaison. A contact number for your liaison should be located on the district’s website.
Recap:
Cross-System Communications

- Breaking down communication barriers is a work in progress. Teachers can help change this problem by reaching out to the student’s social workers and/or attorneys and informing them of problems that may arise.
- Utilize CUM files and school databases to gain information about students in foster care. Contact your foster care liaison when more information is needed.
- Knowledge about California Education Code builds understanding about students in foster care.
- Knowledge about Educational Rights facilitate best practices.

Sample Language:
As we recap the first section of this workshop, cross-system communications, please keep in mind that breaking down communication barriers is a work in progress. However, teachers can generate positive changes in the problem by reaching out to the student’s social workers and/or attorneys and informing them of problems that may arise. Knowing where to access information will aid in knowing who is in foster care, and what the background of the student is. CUM files and school databases can be accessed for information about students in foster care, and in cases where you need additional information, you can contact your foster care liaison. Lastly, the more you know about California Education Code, the more understanding you will have about students in foster care. Knowledge about Educational Rights will help to facilitate best practices, and can protect you from a legal standpoint.
II. Risk Factors

Sample Language:
So now that we have reviewed some laws and policies, and had discussions on how to identify and obtain information about students in foster care, we are able to move into the next section of the workshop: Risk Factors
Sample Language:

As we look through the various risk factors for students in foster care, keep in mind that placement changes increase the level of risk. Children who demonstrate emotional and/or behavioral disorders are more likely to experience a change in placement. With placement change, a student’s ability to develop a sense of connectedness and prosocial relationship is negatively impacted. A study by Ward (2011) reports that 59% of children in care experienced 3 or more home placements, and 22% experienced six or more, all within a 3.5 year span.

California Education Code helps to minimize the amount of placement changes that occur, thus minimizing risk factors for students in foster care. However, risk factors still exist, and it is important to be aware of what they are. Early identification of at-risk students in foster care leads to early intervention and support.
The Greek word “trauma” means an injury or wound. Trauma is not an event, but a response to an experience in which the individual’s physical and mental response has been compromised (both mind and body).

Types of trauma:
- Physical abuse and emotional abuse
- Injury or death of a parent or loved one
- Sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Extreme neglect or deprivation
- Displacement (i.e. children in foster care)

Iceberg Analogy

Hertel, Hull, and Johnson (2013)

Sample Language:
The Greek word “trauma” means an injury or wound. Trauma is not an event, but a response to an experience in which the individual’s physical and mental response has been compromised. Types of trauma include physical abuse, emotional abuse, injury or death of a loved one, sexual abuse, domestic violence, extreme neglect or deprivations, and/or displacement. Many children in foster care have experienced some type of trauma.

Ask:
What are other types of trauma?

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.

Sample Language:
The iceberg analogy refers to our initial impression of a child in foster care. We only see the tip of the iceberg when we first meet a student in foster care. Perhaps what we see is a student who is a bully, or is defiant. It is not until we delve deeper into the child’s world that we learn why a child acts, learns, or feels the way they do. Remember that the student in foster care comes with many unique and often negative experiences that shape who they are. We ask you to be conscious, aware, and sensitive when working with this population.
Former foster child: Derek Clark

- At the age of five, Derek’s mother and stepfather (his biological father was in prison) turned him over to the California foster care system.
- Prior to being placed in the foster care system he suffered from brutal abuse and abandonment.
- He spent thirteen years of his life in the foster care system.
- While in foster care Derek experienced rejection, humiliation, emotional distress and overwhelming anxiety.

Sample Language:

I/We would like to introduce you to Derek Clark, a former foster care child who experienced brutal abuse and abandonment from his biological parents. His father was reported to have severe emotional problems and was in prison for the criminally insane. Derek’s mother lost contact with Derek’s father shortly after giving birth. As a child, Derek was described to have severe emotional and behavioral problems. Derek now is a motivational speaker who shares his life experiences to inspire, train and improve the foster care system.

Note to the presenter(s):

Be sensitive to the audience during this section of the workshop, as some teachers in the audience may have personally experienced abuse, or may know someone who has experienced abuse. Be prepared for an audience reaction, and to provide support.
Perspective from Derek Clark

“Let’s face it, I was a mistake I was never supposed to be born. I’m sure my mother was frustrated when she accidentally became pregnant by a man who had so many emotional problems, who would rape her, have a history of violence, who was a thief and a convicted felon. My mother had to be frustrated for putting herself in that situation, and was unable to live with the consequences: me. I felt that I was a mistake, and that she was going to make me pay for it every time I behaved badly. I couldn’t believe my own mother would hurt me as badly as she did, or be so vindictive.”

Sample Language:
Here is a quote from Derek Clark. It captures his adult perspective, as he reflects on his situation.

Read:
Bullet point.
Sample Language:
Derek Clark writes in his blog how one incident in his life has followed him. As a way to punish him for his behavior his mother placed his hand under scalding hot water, which peeled layers of skin. Ever since this incident whenever he would touch water it would trigger this moment of his life. This situation brings to light the importance of being conscious and sensitive when working with students in foster care. Often, the trauma they have experienced may be unintentionally triggered.

Ask:
What are other potential triggers that student’s in foster care might experience in school? For example, a trigger could be a teacher raising his/her voice. Why might this be a trigger?

Practical Application:
Discuss among yourselves other potential triggers for a student in foster care.

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage audience participation and sharing. Allow 5 minutes for audience to discuss the questions among themselves.
Sample Language:

*In order to better understand the trauma that may affect a child in foster care, we will review different types of abuse, and neglect. Afterward, we will have a small group activity wherein you will apply your experiences in working with students who have been abused/neglected to what you have learned. Please begin thinking about those experiences, and how you knew that the student was a victim of abuse/neglect.*

*Abuse is the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible for the child’s welfare. The child’s health or welfare is deemed harmed or threatened.*
Sample Language:
As previously mentioned in the definition of abuse, types of abuse that a child may endure are physical, sexual, and/or emotional.
Physical Abuse

Any non-accidental injury to a child under the age of 18 by a parent or caretaker. This may include beatings, shakings, burns, human bites, strangulation, or immersion in scalding water, or other, which results in bruises, welts, fractures, scars, burns, or internal injuries.

Brock (2012)

Sample Language:

*Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child under the age of 18 by a parent or caretaker. Please note that abuse is non-accidental, which means that intent is present. Physical abuse could include beatings, shakings, burns, human bites, strangulation, or immersion in scalding water, or other, which results in bruises, welts, fractures, scars, burns, or internal injuries.*
Sample Language:

In addition to the visual evidence that is left behind when a child is physically abused, there are other signs that indicate a child is being physically abused. A student may be frightened of their parents and/or protest/cry when they have to go home. They may be intimidated by adults in general, particularly when they are approached, or a student may tell you directly that they have been injured by a caregiver.

Indications that a parent/caregiver is physically abusing a child include poor or no explanation for injuries. They may have a significantly negative view of the child, use harsh disciplinary measures, or have a history of abuse as a child.
Sample Language:

*Sexual abuse is any inappropriate sexual exposure or touch by an adult to a child or an older child to a younger child. This includes, but is not limited to fondling, sexual intercourse, sexual assault, rape, incest, child prostitution, exposure and pornography.*

While it is hoped that a child who has endured sexual abuse, is safely placed in foster care, children who reside in group homes or residential centers continue to be at greater risk of being sexually abused (Auslander, Edmond, Elize, McMillen, & Thompson, 2002).
Sample Language:

A student who is or has been sexually abused may have difficulty walking or sitting. They may refuse to change for gym, or participate in physical activities. Report of nightmares or bedwetting may be made. Changes in appetite may also occur. A student who demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior may be a victim of sexual abuse. Pregnancy or the contraction of a venereal disease is also an indicator. Similar to physical abuse, a student may directly tell you they are being sexually abused.

A caregiver who is sexually abusing a child may be overprotective of the child or severely limit the child’s contact with other children. They may appear secretive and isolated, or jealous or controlling with other family members.
Emotional Abuse

- Parental behavior that causes or is likely to cause, serious impairment of the physical, social, mental, or emotional capacities of the child.
- These behaviors include: rejection, terrorizing, berating, ignoring or isolating the child.

Sample Language:
Emotional abuse can be more challenging to detect. It occurs when parental behavior causes or is likely to cause, serious impairment of the physical, social, mental, or emotional capacities of the child. These behaviors include: rejection, terrorizing, berating, ignoring or isolating the child.
Sample Language:

*Signs of emotional abuse include extreme behaviors. They may attempt to act like an adult by parenting other children, or act like an infant by rocking back and forth. Physical or emotional development may be delayed. There may be a history of attempted suicide, and there may be a lack of attachment to the caregiver.*

*Signs that a caregiver may be emotionally abusing a child include blaming, belittling, or berating the child. They may appear unconcerned about the child, and even reject the child.*
Failure of parents or caretakers to provide food, clothing, shelter, protection from harm, medical care, hygiene care, and supervision appropriate for the child’s development.

Sample Language:
*Neglect is slightly different than abuse. It is the failure of parents or caretakers to provide food, clothing, shelter, protection from harm, medical care, hygiene care, and supervision appropriate for the child’s development.*
Sample Language:

**Signs of Neglect**

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:
- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:
- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

(U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007)

Sample Language:

*Signs of neglect include poor attendance, begging or stealing food or money. They may lack medical or dental care. The student may be consistently dirty and have severe body odor. They may not have warm clothing in the winter. As a result of neglect, the student may abuse alcohol or drugs. They may inform you that no one is providing care for them.*

*Signs that a caregiver is neglecting a student include indifference toward the child, apathy, depression, irrational behaviors, and/or abusing alcohol or drugs.*

Practical application:

Pass out **Handout #1**

Sample Language:

*I/We recognize that child abuse and neglect is a sensitive topic to address. However, it is very important that you have knowledge about the types of abuse, signs of abuse, and more importantly, what to do in cases where a student is being abused. I/We would like you to break into small group and discuss some of your experiences working with students who have been abused. On the handout, identify what type of abuse(s) the student endured, and the signs that informed you that they had, or were, being abused. In the last column, indicate what you did for the student, if anything. You will have 10 minutes to complete the handout. When we begin our last section (Support Services), you will be presented with ways to support children in foster care; particularly those who have experienced abuse.*
Sample Language:

Even though it is hoped that children in foster care are placed in a safe situation, adults should continue to be vigilant in looking for signs of abuse and neglect that may occur within the foster care system. Remember, that all school staff members are mandated reporters, and therefore responsible for filing a Child Protective Services (CPS) report when a child is suspected of being abused or neglected.

Why must you report? Penal Code § 11166 is meant to protect children. By protecting an identified child, there is an opportunity to protect other children in the home. Help is also provided to the suspected abuser. When you report abuse, a change in the home environment may lower the risk of abuse.

Who reports? Anyone who works with children. This list is not an exhaustive list. Note that teachers are school staff members are listed.

Note to the presenter(s):
For additional information and details about filing a CPS report, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
When must you report?
- When a mandated reporter “...has knowledge of or observes a child in his or her professional capacity, or within the scope of his or her employment whom he or she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect...” (P.C. 11166(a)).
- "Reasonable suspicion" occurs when "it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain such a suspicion based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience, to suspect child abuse." (P.C. 11166(a)(1)).

Do you have to disclose that you filed a report?
- NO. All jurisdictions have provisions in statute to maintain the confidentiality of abuse and neglect records. The identity of the reporter is specifically protected from disclosure to the alleged perpetrator in 39 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. This protection is maintained even when other information from the report may be disclosed.

Sample Language:
When must you report? When you know or reasonably suspect that a child has been a victim of abuse or neglect. You must have reasonable suspicion, so if you suspect, make a report. A report must be filed immediately (or as soon as reasonably possible) by phone. A written report must be forwarded within 36 hours of receiving the information regarding the incident. The website that will take you to the mandated reporter form can be found in your Foster Care Resource Packet under Resources for Teachers.

Many people who file reports may experience anxiety before doing so. This is often due to the concern that the suspected abuser will find out who filed the report. In the state of California, you do not have to disclose that you filed a report!

Ask:
Do you have any questions regarding abuse, neglect, and/or your role as a mandated reporter?
Sample Language:
Now that you have learned about the types of trauma that students in foster care may encounter, I/we will explore three areas wherein problems may develop: Externalizing problems; Internalizing problems; and Academic problems.
Sample Language:

*Let’s first make the distinction between external and internal behaviors. External problems are maladaptive behaviors such as defiance, rule-breaking, and disrupting. Internal problems are covert behaviors such as withdrawal, depression, and isolation.*

Ask:

*What are some more examples of external and internal problems?*

Note to the presenter(s):

Encourage responses and open dialogue.
Sample Language:

*Teachers report the following external concerns when working with this population:*

1) *Behavior is the most challenging area.*

2) *Behaviors include explosive and unpredictable aggressive behaviors such as tantrums and hitting, and hyperactivity.*

3) *Behaviors may become more variable after a weekend in which the student was supposed to visit their biological parents.*

*External problems are the easiest to target because they are obvious, apparent, and often times the most distracting for both teachers and other students.*
Sample Language:

*Here are some of the reported external problems seen among this population. More severe external problems include Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), and Conduct Disorder (CD). Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is also noted as a prevalent external problem.*

Read:

Second bullet point.

Sample Language:

*Maladaptive behavior has been defined in many ways. Many of the definitions allude to behaviors that are counterproductive, or patterns of behaviors that result in a negative outcome.*

A study by Traube, et al. (2012) found that of 827 children age 11 and up, 47.7% engaged in social substance use (I.e., alcohol and tobacco), and 17% engaged in illicit substance use. Within this study, it was found that a protective factor for children in foster care was remaining in the home of origin during their time in foster care (no placement changes outside of original home setting) and a sense of connectedness with the caregiver. While a sense of connectedness with a caregiver can be challenging for the transitioning child, consideration for developing this connectedness in the school must be made. As we continue with this workshop, keep in mind this idea of building a sense of connectedness.
The majority of both general and special education teachers described a heightened level of emotional challenges for children in foster care when compared to children who were not in care.

Special and general education teachers report that students in foster care display and demonstrate difficulties facilitating pro-social peer relationships, shutting down, withdrawal, and depression.

Sample Language:

Teachers report the following external concerns when working with this population:

- A heightened level of emotional challenges
- Difficulties facilitating prosocial peer relationships, shutting down, withdrawal, and depression.
Here are some of the reported internal problems seen among this population. More severe internal problems include Major Depressive Disorder, Major Depressive Episode, and Panic Attack. Anxiety is also seen within this population. Significant difficulty developing relationships and attachments to peers and adults also exists. Maltreatment is also prevalent among this population, which is why it is important to identify students who are being abused as early as possible. Maltreatment often leads to internalizing problems when left unaddressed.
Early Identification (Internalizing)

- Early identification of internalizing disorders is particularly critical among this population due to the increased risk of developing such disorders directly after placement into the foster care system (McMillen, et al. 2005)

Sample Language:

*Keeping a watchful eye for internalizing problems aids in early identification. Your input is vital to school psychologists, mental health therapists, and even to foster parents/caregivers.*
Risk Factors: Academic Problems

- High dropout rates (Pecora, 2012)
- High rate of grade retention (National, 2011)
- Below grade-level performance in all academic areas (Zetlin et al., 2010)
- Negative perception of school (Sullivan et al., 2010)

Sample Language:
A significant amount of research indicates that being in foster care puts students at academic risk. Risk factors include higher dropout rates, higher rates of grade retention, below grade-level performance, and a negative perception of school.
Sample Language:

_Students in foster care are at a greater risk for developing external, internal, and academic problems. Often times these develop as a result of trauma, which is prevalent in the form of abuse. Your awareness of these risk factors aids in the early identification of students in foster care who may go on to develop more severe problems._

_Resources for the presenter(s):_
For a quick reference for risk factors, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Sample Language:
We have reached the last section in this workshop. It is the section in which you will take away tools and ideas to directly implement with students in foster care.
Sample Language:
*How do teachers provide support to children in foster care? (Rhetorical)*

Practical Application:
Pass out handout #2

Sample Language:
*In order to see what teachers are currently doing to support students in foster care, we are going to break into small groups in order to identify problems or risk factors that you have encountered working with students in foster care, and how you provided support to the student. For example, a newly placed student was demonstrating isolation and withdrawal so you introduced them to a few model students for social support. Do not be discouraged if you have a difficult time coming up with situations. This section is designed to increase the amount of tools in your foster care tool bag. Feel free to add to your chart as we move through this section.*

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue about what teachers came up with for the activity. Give the audience 10 minutes to complete the handout.
Evidence-Based Support Services

- School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (SWPBIS/PBIS)
- Suspension Alternatives
- Pro-social Relationships
- Buddy System
- Bibliotherapy

Sample Language:
I/We will provide information about the following evidence-based support services.

Read:
Bullet points.
School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (SWPBIS/PBIS):
refers to a systems change process for an entire school or district. The underlying theme is teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as any core curriculum subject.

Sample Language:

*SWPBIS/PBIS refers to a systems change process for an entire school or district. The underlying theme is teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as the core curriculum subject.*

Ask:

*By a show of hands, how many of you have heard of SWPBIS or PBIS?*
Sample Language:
Some of you are probably familiar with the three-tiered intervention model from learning about academic interventions through the RtI process. This tiered system provides different levels of interventions and supports that promote prosocial behaviors across settings. SWPBIS/PBIS occurs in Tier 1, which consists of 80% of the students at school. This tier serves as a great way to disseminate appropriate behavioral, social and emotional strategies to students, and identify at-risk students in foster care.
Sample Language:

*The purpose of Tier 1 is to teach social and emotional skills that serve as a foundation for all students at the school level. Behavioral expectations are set and taught throughout the school. When students are caught being good, they gain recognition, and when they make poor choices, correction systems are utilized. The Tier 1 level of support also allows for collecting behavioral data.*
Sample Language:
*Developing a system-wide behavior system requires careful thought and consideration. Operational definitions are particularly important. Operational definitions look at the specific behavior, not general statements about behavior. Let’s operationally define the behavior of a student who is being disrespectful*....

Note to presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue. Responses could include: verbally inappropriate language toward staff, noncompliance in the way of work refusal, throwing books on the ground, etc.
Sample Language:

*Here is an example of a well thought out PBIS matrix. It explains what behavior should look like in various areas of the school.*

**Ask:**

*How could a system-wide behavior system benefit students in foster care?*

**Note to presenter(s):**

Encourage responses and open dialogue. Responses could include: explicit instruction of what appropriate behavior looks like is taught, or recognition for engaging in appropriate behaviors.
Sample Language:

*Once Tier 1 is implemented, school staff may notice that some students are in need of extra support. This extra support is provided in Tier 2. Small social skills groups are a good example of a Tier 2 support. Inquire within your school site and/or district to see if social skills groups are being facilitated.*

Ask:

*How could Tier 2 intervention benefit a student in foster care?*

Note to presenter(s):

Encourage responses and open dialogue. Responses could include: early identification of emerging problem behavior/concerns, or an opportunity to work on skills within a smaller group setting.
Sample Language:

Tier 3 consists of an even smaller subset of students who are in need of more intensive interventions in order to move toward mastery of behaviors and universal skills. Examples of Tier 3 support could be individualized counseling with a counselor or school psychologist, or outside services.

Ask:

How could Tier 3 intervention benefit a student in foster care?

Note to presenter(s):

Encourage responses and open dialogue. Responses could include: early identification of severe problems.
Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula

- **What is SEL?**
  - This refers to a student learning how to demonstrate appropriate social functioning and emotional functioning

- **Social functioning could include:**
  - Peer relationship
  - Ability to resolve conflict
  - Social engagement such as reciprocal verbal and nonverbal interactions

- **Emotional functioning could include:**
  - Appropriate emotional responses to events
  - Demonstrating appropriate emotional coping skills
    - For example: How to work through feelings of anger

Sample Language:

*Up until this point I/we present PBIS as a collaborative school wide system change. However, there is a specific component of PBIS that can be implemented directly by teachers as a part of the curriculum. Social emotional curricula is considered to be a PBIS Tier 1 level of support.*

Social emotional learning or SEL is a relatively new concept. It refers to a student learning how to demonstrate appropriate social and emotional functioning. Examples of social functioning include peer relationships, conflict resolution and social interactions. Examples of emotional functioning include appropriate emotional responses, and coping skills such as anger management.

Ask:

*What are some more examples of social functioning? Behavioral functioning? Are these external or internal behavior or are they both?*

Note to presenter(s):

Encourage responses and open dialogue.
Sample Language:

Three evidence-based curricula that can be used in the classroom are Second Step, Steps to Respect, and Strong Kids. Each targets social and emotional skills, which can be implemented at a school-wide level. Each curriculum is easy to implement, and come equipped with scripts.
Lesson Plan: Second Step

Getting Started:
- Lesson's objectives
  - Example:
    - Students will be able to:
      - Identify common playground conflicts
      - Demonstrate Problem-Solving Steps to handle playground conflicts
  - List of materials needed
  - Lesson preparation

Adapted from Committee for Children (2013)

Sample Language:
A commonly used curriculum is Second Step. The lesson plans for Second Step are organized in a way very similar to that of classroom curriculum used in your class. The first part of the lesson provides pertinent background information such as the lesson’s objective, materials required most of which are included in the kit, and how to prepare for the lesson. You want to make sure to look at this section prior to implementing the lesson as it will tell you what materials you will need and how to set-up your room. For example, you may need to hang posters in the classroom with problem-solving steps or rules.

Note to the presenter(s):
For additional information and details about SEL curricula, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Lesson Plan: Second Step, contd.

- Scripted lesson with pacing guide
  - Introduction (5 minutes)
  - Discussion (10 minutes)
  - Activity (20 minutes)
  - Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Adapted from Committee for Children (2013)

Sample Language:
Each lesson plan has a script and is accompanied with a pacing guide to help facilitate the lesson. You will find that the lesson is easy to follow and implement. For example a lesson plan might be set up in this format in which you introduce the students to a scenario and have them identify the emotions presented on the audio or video clip. This would then be followed up with questions such as: “What kinds of emotions do you think these kids were feeling?” In the discussion section you may be directed to have students reflect and on their own personal experiences. The introduction and discussion section will prepare the students for the main activity. Typically the main activity will introduce students to strategies they can use such as problem-solving steps. Once the students have had the opportunity to learn and practice the new strategies you can wrap-up the activity by reviewing the strategies they were introduced to.
Why PBIS?

- Through PBIS school staff is able to learn how to effectively teach and reinforce appropriate behavior, discourage inappropriate behavior, monitor students, and monitor and track data in order to make decisions.

- A study found that regardless of the school's socioeconomic status, teachers who implemented PBIS with fidelity experienced lower levels of burn out rate, and increased levels of efficacy. (Ross, Romer, and Horner, 2011)

Sample Language:

Why PBIS? In addition to students learning appropriate behaviors, school staff learns how to effectively teach and reinforce the behaviors and progress monitor students. Most importantly, a study by Ross, Romer, and Horner (2011) found that regardless of a school’s socioeconomic status, teachers who implemented PBIS with fidelity experienced lower levels of burn out rate, and increased levels of efficacy!

While all schools may not have PBIS in place, or may not be willing to implement it at this time, SEL curricula individual lesson plans can be used at an individual or classroom level as needed. This is beneficial for students in foster care, who may need a structured, and explicit lesson about behavior, socialization or emotions.

For example, if a student in foster care is having conflict with peers, implement a lesson plan (class) or lesson worksheet(s) (individual) that targets problem solving steps to solve peer conflicts.

Ask your district if SEL curricula is available for use.
Sample Language:
Suspension alternatives are a helpful way to support students in foster care; particularly, for those exhibiting more external behaviors. CEC suggests using counseling, anger-management programs, and community service during non-school hours for alternates to suspension for students in foster care. We will explain some of the reasons why alternatives can be helpful, and methods you can use to reduce the amount of suspensions at your school.
What reasons are students suspended for in your school district?

Ask:
What reasons are students suspended for in your school district?

Note to presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.
Before referring a student to the office, determine if the behavior is a result of:
1. Making a bad choice
2. A skill/ability deficit
3. A social/emotional need

Sample Language:
*It takes investigative work to determine why any student behaves the way they do; however, it may be worth the investigative work before deciding to suspend a student in foster care. As we already reviewed, this population often has a negative past, ridden with instability. Any one of these past memories or current situations could help explain why they are behaving the way they are.*

*So, before you refer a student to the office, determine if the behavior is a result of 1) Making a bad choice, 2) A skill/ability deficit, or 3) A social/emotional need.*
1. Making a bad choice

- When a student makes a bad choice is it because they “can’t” or “won’t” do something?
  - Follow school site procedure on how to manage these behaviors.

Sample Language:

*In order to determine if the student is simply making a bad choice, determine if they are making a bad choice because they “can’t” do it, or if they are making a bad choice because they “won’t” do it. If they cannot exhibit a good choice, staff may need to investigate why the student is unable to do so, and move on to the second step. For example, perhaps the student has just experienced a home placement change and is unhappy with his/her foster parents. This situation could evoke significant spikes in problem behavior.*

*Or, is the student simply being defiant and won’t comply. Perhaps the student needs to make a phone call home, apologize, or receive a detention. If the behavior continues, to a degree that impacts the student’s learning, a Behavior Support Plan (BSP) may be needed.*
Is the student unable to do something?

- Social emotional training can be provided through the use social emotional curricula at the Tier 1 level.

- Teach and model the appropriate skill/ability. Example: "When you have a disagreement with a classmate you can 1) talk to an adult about it; 2) find another peer to work/play with.

- Pair the student with a peer who successfully displays the skill/ability.

Chin and Dowdy (2013)

Sample Language:

*When it is deemed that the behavior occurs because the student “can’t” do something, we must determine if they lack the skill or ability to make a better choice? At this step, a student may need to learn the skill necessary to make good choices. Learning can take place at the Tier 1 PBIS level, through direct teaching and modeling of the skill/ability, or pairing the student with a peer. Let’s focus on the direct teaching and modeling technique.

Practical Application: Have the audience break into small groups, and assign them with one of the following behaviors:

- Being a poor sport
- Teasing other students
- Constantly asking peers for their food at lunch
- Not participating in small group activities
- Constantly seeking the attention of adults

Sample Language:

*Keeping in mind that these students are in foster care and may not have been taught the skill/ability to engage in an alternative behavior, how can you teach and model the alternative behavior? Here is an example: The behavior is arguing with classmates, so the teaching/modeling would be 1) talk to an adult about it, and 2) find a different peer to work/play with when you are feeling upset. Engage the student in a role play. Perhaps, teach a SEL lesson about how to recognize when you are feeling upset."
3. A social emotional need

- Is the student’s behavior a result of a manifestation of emotional-behavior concerns?
  - Social emotional training can be provided through the use of social emotional curricula at the Tier 1 level
  - Provide strategies to cope with their emotions
    - Anger rating scales, 1-5 check-in (Ex: How are you feeling today on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the worst, and 5 being the best)

Chin and Dowdy (2013)

Sample Language:

*When it is deemed that the behavior occurs because the student has a social emotional need, the previously mentioned techniques can be helpful, paired with more specific social and emotional coping techniques. Rating scales are particularly helpful in validating a student’s feelings, and teaching them how to self-monitor.*

Resources for the presenter(s):

For additional information and details about reducing the rate of suspension (Behavior Flow Chart), please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Sample Language:
Here are some rating scales that you can use to help measure student’s feelings. Each is on a scale wherein calm feelings are on the bottom of the scale, and angry feelings are on the top. It teaches students that anger is something that develops within a situation. Rating scales help students to identify what there triggers are, and how to notice when they are climbing up the scale. These are great ways to encourage self-monitoring.

Resources for the presenter(s):
For copies of rating scales, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Introducing Rating Scales

1. Tell the student that it is okay to have feelings, even when they are uncomfortable feelings, such as anger.

2. Have the student describe their feelings using the 1-5 check-in or rating scales (i.e., I start to tremble when I get frustrated).

3. Have the student use the chart to describe their feelings (self-monitor). If a student is in the angry phase, they might need a 5 minute break alone.

Sample Language:
When using rating scales you want to be sure to normalize the student’s feelings; particularly uncomfortable feelings like anger. Everyone has feelings and that is okay. It is how we manage those feelings that are most important. On either scale, have the student operationally define their feelings at each level on the scale. After, the student can begin to self-monitor by using the scale when they begin to have significant feelings.
Sample Language:

*Identifying problem behaviors early, and teaching the student an alternative behavior, can help reduce the rate of suspension among this population. However, there are times when a student lacks a skill/ability or has a social emotional need that is beyond your expertise. In times when a child needs more than what you (the teacher) can provide, here are some questions to consider.*

*Does the child currently receive outside mental health services? Consider asking the foster parent, social worker, or FC liaison. Is the child a good candidate for a Healthy Start referral? Counseling services may be provided to a student through a Healthy Start referral. Can individual counseling/therapy be provided at the school site? Are social skills groups available? Check with counselors and your school psychologist to see if these services are available. If groups are offered, you may refer multiple students in foster care to the group. Lastly, is the school site associated with outside organizations that can provide mentoring?*
Sample Language:

Why do we need to consider alternatives to suspension? Studies show that students who are suspended are 50% more likely to engage in antisocial behavior, and 70% are more likely to engage in violent behavior 12 months after a suspension. Studies also show that suspensions can lead to academic difficulties due to missing out on instructional time, feelings of school isolation, dropping out of school, engaging in criminal acts and delinquency, and/or engaging in alcohol and drug use.

Given that students in foster care are already at risk for maladaptive behaviors that, they are at greater risk for suspension.
Prosocial Relationships:
A socially appropriate relationship between two students and/or a relationship between the identified student and teacher that is sustained across a long period of time.

Sample Language:
Prosocial relationships are one of the most important and easy to implement supports for students in foster care. Prosocial relationships are socially appropriate relationships between two students and/or a relationship between the identified student and teacher that is sustained across a long period of time. In a world where instability prevails, a teacherstudent relationship can take on a very important meaning for a student in foster care.
In the cases where a caregiver connection cannot be made at home, researchers suggest that positive adult connections be fostered and promoted within the school system.

Sample Language:
I/We asked you to consider the idea of building a sense of connectedness with a student in foster care earlier in the presentation. The reason is because teachers are in a great position to build this connection. You see the child every day, over the course of an entire school year, and the teacher may be the only constant adult available for the student in foster care. Building a prosocial relationship also is a powerful support for students in foster care who have been abused, or are currently being abused.
Sample Language:

What can teachers do to foster pro-social relationships? They can promote resiliency, build rapport, and make themselves available to the student. I/We will go into more detail about each of these.
Sample Language:
A teacher can promote resiliency by providing care and support, which refers to love, empathy and understanding. They can also have high expectations by believing in the student when they do not believe in themselves. Also, they can identify and build on strengths by empowering the student. Lastly, teachers can provide opportunities for involvement by engaging the student in the process of developing a relationship.

Each aspect of promoting resiliency is particularly important for a student in foster care. Often, adults become sympathetic after hearing about the hardships of a student in foster care, and may inadvertently treat them differently or as if they are incapable. This treatment comes from a good place, but it is not the best way to promote resiliency. These students are capable, have strengths, and an ability to learn. Foster these amazing qualities by promoting resiliency.
Sample Language:

When building rapport with a student it is important to convey empathy, warmth and respect in order for the student to feel comfortable. Remember to normalize the student’s feelings. Be sure to be understanding and non-judgmental toward the student. Here is an example of what you can say to a student to help normalize their feelings.

Read:
“Students who go through what you have gone through, sometimes feel sad or uncomfortable. If you ever want to talk about your feelings, or situation, I’m a safe person to talk to about it”.

Ask:
Take a few minutes to think of other things you might say to a student to build rapport. The more we rehearse these statements, the more automatic they become for us.

Note to presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue.
Sample Language:

*It is important to make yourself available to the student. One method to use is Check-in/Check-out. Through this method, the student checks-in and check-out with a staff member. The staff member will review the goals for the day, which will be written on a record chart. Throughout the day you (the teacher) will provide corrective feedback on his/her progress towards their goals. You can utilize the techniques you just learned with regards to teaching and modeling appropriate behavior.*

*Even though this method appears to be very goal-oriented, it still allows an opportunity for a pro-social relationship to be built. By supporting a student to reach their goals, whether it be social, emotional, academic, or behavioral, you are able to share in their journey and successes, and promote resiliency.*

Resources for the presenter(s):
For additional information and details about CICO, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Where to begin when using CICO……

- Decide on three to five goals to work toward
- Teach student explicitly how to obtain the goals
- Select reward options
- Get buy-in from student and guardian(s)
- Designate a time for Check-in and Check-out
- Designate times for providing student with ratings
- Create rating charts
- Create home reports

Horner et al. (2013)

Sample Language:

When using CICO, decide on 3 to 5 goals. Use what we just practiced, by teaching and modeling a skill. Identify what rewards the student is willing to work for. Examples could be time on the computer, skipping a homework assignment, or even a piece of candy (be sure the student doesn’t have any allergies). Get buy-in from the student and guardian. Each day you should check-in and check-out at approximately the same time. To simplify the process, the rating chart can double as the home report. Send the student’s daily rating chart home to be signed and returned the next day.
Sample Language:

*Here is a chart that depicts how the Check-in/Check-out method works. As you can see the student’s progress is constantly being monitored.*
Sample Language:
When using CICO, check-in with your student in the morning. Review the rules of CICO, and explicitly state the daily goal and reward. This might also be a good time to teach and model the alternative behavior(s). Provide the ratings at specified times throughout the days. For example, after recess, or during lunch. This is a good time to provide corrective feedback if the student is having a tough day, or provide verbal praise if the student is having a good day. Check-out generally occurs in the afternoon. This is a time to review daily progress, reward the student if applicable, and sending the home report home.
Why CICO?

- **Convenient:**
  - Can be implemented by all school staff
- **Easy:**
  - Very low effort by teachers
- **Collaborative:**
  - Home/school linkage
- **Informational:**
  - Continuous monitoring for progress
- **Flexible:**
  - Intervention can be applied in all settings

Horner et al. (2013)

Sample Language:

*So some of you might ask “Why should I do Check-in/Check-out”? This method is convenient, easy, collaborative, informational and flexible. It helps to monitor and foster good behavior, and build a prosocial relationship with an adult.*
Examples of CICO Record Charts

Sample Language:

*Next you will see some examples of record charts used for students.*
### CICO Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Respectful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check In</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Recess</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Lunch</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Recess</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check Out</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today’s goal</td>
<td>Today’s total points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Language:

*In this chart we can see that the student’s goals are to be safe, responsible and respectful. The student is to be provided with feedback during check-in time, before recess, before lunch, after recess, and during check-out.*
Sample Language:

*Here is a different approach to a Check-in/Check-out record chart.*
Sample Language:

*In order to communicate with the student’s guardian you may use a home report such as this one.*

Ask:

*What are other ways that you can make yourself available to a student in foster care besides CICO?*

Note to presenter(s):

Encourage responses and open dialogue.
Why Prosocial Relationships?

- The caregiver relationship is viewed as an evidence-based treatment that provides ongoing coaching, training, and support (Pecora, 2012)
- A lack of attachment between a child and their caregiver(s) can lead to:
  - Over vigilance
  - Developing a connection with every adult
  - Not developing an attachment with any adult.
- Children who lack the ability to form attachments or form unhealthy attachments may also have difficulty developing relationships with peers (Harden, 2004)

Sample Language:
So why is it important to develop a relationship with students in foster care? Research suggests that a caregiver relationship provide coaching, training and support for students in foster care. Students who do not attach to their caregivers may develop too many connections or too few connections with adults. They may also have difficulty developing relationships with their peers. Since students in foster care are less likely to attach to a caregiver, a connection with the teacher may provide a foundational connection that they can reference for years to come.
Sample Language:
*The next support service is the Buddy System. This entails identifying the academic area in which the student in foster care needs support. The student is then paired with a peer so that they can complete class assignments together.*
Can be used in the classroom

Entails pairing the student in foster care with a peer

Provides academic support, social emotional, and behavioral support

Sample Language:

*Buddy Systems are utilized right in the classroom, with a same-age peer who is performing at grade-level or above, and provide more than just academic support. The students also receive social, emotional, and even behavioral support from their peer.*
This approach helps facilitate the development of peer relationships, as well as providing the student in foster care with a sense of belonging. This is particularly helpful when a student has experienced a recent placement change.

Sample Language:

*Because the Buddy System targets more than just academics, it is ideal for students in foster care. Those who have recently experienced a placement change may particularly benefit from the Buddy System.*
Why the Buddy System?

- It is easy to implement
- It is an inclusive system used to address academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs
- Research supports the use of Buddy Systems

Sample Language:
*The Buddy System is research based, easy to implement, and addresses a variety of areas besides academics.*
Bibliotherapy: The use of reading materials for help in solving problems.

Sample Language:
Bibliotherapy is the final support service that this workshop will address.
Sample Language:

Steps one and two are both areas that have already been touched on in this workshop. Therefore, the focus will be on steps three and four. Before you begin using bibliotherapy, be sure to make sure the student is ready to talk about their foster care situation and experiences, and establish rapport using the techniques you learned earlier in this workshop. Next, you will select literature that is appropriate for the student. Afterward, you will engage the student in a post-reading discussion.
Choose the appropriate literature

- Select a book that is at the student’s reading level, or read the book directly to the student.

- Recommended Books:
  - *The heart knows something different: teenage voices from the foster care system*, written by Al Desetta
  - *Nightwalkers*, written by Judy K. Morris
  - *The Story of Tracey Beaker*, written by Jacqueline Wilson
  - *Love, Sarah*, written by Mary Beth Lundgren

Sample Language:

Students in foster care are at a high risk of developing reading deficits (Pears, Heywood, Kim, & Fisher, 2011), which is why careful consideration should be made when selecting a book. Presenting a child with a book that is above their reading level may cause more harm than good. In cases where the book is above the student’s reading level, feel free to read the book aloud to the student.

Some books to consider are “The Heart Knows Something Different: Teenage Voices from the Foster Care System”, by Al Desetta. This book offers over three dozen narratives from teenagers within the foster care system. It offers realistic and hopeful perspectives from the voices of actual children in foster care. “Nightwalkers, by Judy K. Morris, “The Story of Tracey Beaker, by Jacqueline Wilson, and “Love, Sarah”, written by Mary Beth Lundgren are also recommended books. Each book explores a child in foster care’s feelings about the absence of a biological family, developing feelings toward foster families, and coping with previous maltreatment. By the end of each story, all of the characters reach a hopeful resolution.

Note to the presenter(s):
For additional recommended bibliotherapy reads, please refer to the FCRP in the appendix.
Post Reading Discussion

- Facilitate conversations about the characters’ behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, and outcomes.
- Allow the student a chance to find similarities and/or differences in the story and compare it to their own life.
- This is a valuable time to answer any questions or allow the student to express feelings that the student may be weighing heavily on.

Henderson & Thompson (2011)

Sample Language:
The post reading discussion is a time when a student may open up about foster care experiences and family history. Use this opportunity to point out the student’s strengths and resilience, facilitate conversation, and identify with the protagonist in the story.

Ask:
Are there any books that you have found helpful when working with this population?

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage audience participation and sharing.
Sample Language:
It is hoped that this workshop has presented you with new ways to support students in foster care. While a PBIS school-based system change serves as a foundation for teaching all students appropriate behaviors, not all schools utilize it. However, lesson plans from SEL curricula can be used to target specific student or classroom behaviors. When students in foster care are not being explicitly taught about appropriate behaviors on a daily basis, they run a higher risk of being suspended. Instead of viewing the student as just having a behavior problem, we can delve deeper and identify if there are areas of need that need to be addressed. This reduces the rate of suspension and arms the student with the skill set to make better choices. Research suggests that suspensions can be detrimental to students in foster care. Prosocial relationships are vital for a student in foster care because it serves as a positive frame of reference for what a healthy relationship should look like. Developing resiliency, and rapport, and making yourself available to the student are ways to build prosocial relationships. Systems like CICO can double as a behavior monitoring system and a prosocial relationship. When time is limited, or a quick solution is needed, the buddy system can build healthy peer relationships and assist with academic support. Bibliotherapy provides safe and open arena for students in foster care to talk about sensitive situations.
Joe is a 6th grade student in foster care. It has been a few months since the school year began, and he is still having difficulty making new friends, and he spends his recess in the classroom with his head on his desk. He is quiet when you approach him and answers in one-word responses. Where do you begin, and what would you do as the student’s teacher?

Practical Application:
Refer to case study.

Sample Language:
*Break into small groups, read the case study, and discuss the following questions. Using the information you gathered from this workshop, answer the following questions:*

- How will you gather more information about the student’s placement and history?
- What exactly do you want to learn about Joe?
- What risk factors may Joe be facing?
- What behaviors is Joe demonstrating?
- What support service(s) should be utilized to support Joe? Why?

Note to the presenter(s):
Encourage responses and open dialogue. Give the audience 15 minutes to break into small groups and answer the questions amongst themselves.
Sample Language:

*Here are resources that you can utilize to learn more about information provided in this workshop.*

Note to the presenter(s):

For a copy of Resources for Teachers, please refer to the form in the appendix.
Sample Language:
Your participation and discussion has been greatly appreciated. I/We hope that you feel better equipped to work with students who are in foster care. At this time, do you have any final thoughts, comments, or questions?

Thank you for your time. If you need more information, you can contact the presenters.

Note to presenter(s):
Provide your contact information to the audience if needed.
APPENDIX C

Foster Care Resource Packet
Foster Care Resource Packet

Created by Melissa Fumiyo Ponce and Vanessa Romo
Foster Care Laws
ENSURING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND STABILITY FOR FOSTER YOUTH
AB 490 SUMMARY

Effective January 1, 2004, AB 490 (Steinberg), Chapter 862, imposes new duties and rights related to the education of dependents and wards in foster care. The Act’s key provisions are as follows:

- Establishes legislative intent that foster youth are ensured access to the same opportunities to meet academic achievement standards to which all students are held, maintain stable school placements, be placed in the least restrictive educational placement and, have access to the same academic resources, services and extracurricular and enrichment activities as all other children. Makes clear that education and school placement decisions are to be dictated by the best interest of the child.

- Creates school stability for foster children by allowing them to remain in their school of origin for the duration of the school year when their placement changes and remaining in the same school is in the child’s best interests.

- Requires county placing agencies to promote educational stability by considering in placement decisions the child’s school attendance area.

Requires Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to designate a staff person as a foster care education liaison to ensure proper placement, transfer and enrollment in school for foster youth.

- Makes LEAs and county social workers or probation officers jointly responsible for the timely transfer of students and their records when a change of schools occurs.

- Requires that a comprehensive public school be considered as the first school placement option for foster youth.

- Provides that a foster child has the right to remain enrolled in and attend his/her school of origin pending resolution of school placement disputes.

- Allows a foster child to be immediately enrolled in school even if all typically required school records, immunizations, or school uniforms are not available.

- Requires an LEA to deliver the pupil’s education information and records to the next educational placement within 2 days of receiving a transfer request from a county placing agency.
Requires school districts to calculate and accept **credit for full or partial coursework** satisfactorily completed by the student and earned while attending a public school, juvenile court school or nonpublic, nonsectarian school.

Authorizes the **release of educational records** of foster youth to the county placing agency, for purpose of compliance with WIC 16010, case management responsibilities required by the Juvenile Court or law, or to assist with transfer or enrollment of a pupil.

Ensures that foster youth will not be penalized for **absences** due to placement changes, court appearances, or related court ordered activities.

Youth Law Center/Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles December, 2003
AB 1909 – Foster Youth: Discipline Notification

Assembly Bill 1909 requires that school districts notify a foster youth’s county social workers and attorney if the youth is facing expulsion or is subject to a manifestation determination Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. It also requests that placing agencies include the name and contact information for the youth’s social worker and attorney when providing schools with information about the youth’s prior educational placements.

THE ISSUE
Current law requires school districts to provide parental notification when a student is faced with pending expulsion or suspension. In addition, existing law also requires that a parent is notified if the student has a disability and is subject to a manifestation determination IEP meeting, which is a meeting with appropriate school officials to determine if the student’s conduct was linked to his or her disability. These notifications are essential to parental engagement with school administrators and teachers to understand and address the underlying cause of the student’s behavioral issues and determine an appropriate response. However, because foster youth often change homes and the adult responsible for the education also shifts, it is difficult for the school to identify the appropriate adult to contact if discipline problems arise. This can result in the child being removed from school or expelled without the foster care agency or the child’s attorney knowing the student’s academic situation before it is too late. A lack of notification to parties responsible for the foster youth’s welfare creates a missed opportunity to address the root causes of that youth’s behavioral issues and lead to an unnecessary disruption in the foster youth’s education.

THE SOLUTION
Promptly notifying the foster youth’s county social worker and attorney of a pending expulsion and/or manifestation determination IEP meeting would ensure the foster youth has access to an adult advocate throughout the disciplinary process. Notification would also allow the social worker and attorney to connect the foster youth to any mental health and assessment services provided by the court or local child welfare agency that they might need. Providing the school with contact information for the youth’s social worker and attorney would mitigate the existing communication gap between schools and those responsible for the youth’s welfare, especially in instances of disciplinary procedures.

BACKGROUND
Foster youth are more likely to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems than their non-foster peers, which often impact their school behavior. Children and youth in foster care are subject to disproportionate levels of discipline and are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their non-foster peers. A 2009 San Mateo County study showed that foster youth were ten times more likely than their non-foster counterparts to be expelled and 2.5 times more likely to be suspended. A study of foster youth in several states showed that two thirds (67%) of youth in out-of-home care had been suspended
from school at least once compared to 28% in a national sample of general population youth; one-sixth (17%) of the foster youth had been expelled compared with 5% of the general population sample.

**SUPPORT**
Public Counsel (Co-sponsor)  
Legal Advocates for Children & Youth (Co-sponsor)  
American Civil Liberties Union of California  
Elk Grove Unified School District Foster Youth Services  
Legal Services for Children  
National Center for Youth Law  
San Mateo Foster Youth Services  
Youth and Education Law Project, Mills Legal Clinic

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**
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Updated on 3/20/2012
AB 12

OVERVIEW

What is AB 12 (the California Fostering Connections to Success Act)?
AB 12, a law that passed in 2010, allows foster youth under the age of 17 (as of January 2011) to be provided transitional support up to age 20 (possibly to 21 if funding is made available by 2014).

What is the purpose of AB 12?
The purpose of AB 12 is to provide extended support services to foster youth, whom are legal adults, to help in the transition process and ensure that they are given the necessary skills to survive on their own.

ELIGIBILITY

If I want to have this support should I do?
Once you turn 18, you will automatically be eligible for this support (you must live in an approved placement, meet one of the program requirements options, and sign a mutual agreement). You can decide that you don’t want to take part in this program, and then you can decide to leave the program and “opt-out”. A caseworker will be assigned to each youth to assist them with developing their own case plan and to help them meet the program requirements (see program requirements below).

What are the program requirements for AB 12?
A youth must be working or going to school at least part time.

Will my case be court supervised?
Yes, youth that decide to opt-in will have their case under court supervision and there will be a minimum of court reviews every six months.

What are the basic eligibility requirements?
A youth must be in a high school or in a GED program, enrolling in a college or vocational program, employed at least 80 hours a month, participating in a program aimed at gaining employment, or unable to work/attend school because of a medical condition. A youth must also live in an approved placement and sign a mutual agreement with their case worker.

If I want to live in my foster home after age 18 will I have to be fingerprinted?
No. The only exception is if you leave the program and come back and are going to live in a placement with minors in foster care.

How long does it take to get in to the AB 12 program?
Once you turn 18 you are automatically in the program unless you opt-out. If you leave the program and decide you want back in the program there will be a process. As the
program is developing over the next few months CYC is advocating that the process to re-enter the program or opt-in be as simple and as fast as possible, but as of now we are unaware of how long it will take.

**If I decide I do not want to participate in the program and decide later that I do, can I?**
Yes, you can decide to leave the program at any time under what is called “trial independence” and come back at any time as long as you are still eligible (see program requirements) and are under the age limit. There will be a process you need to go through to re-enter the program.

**Can I take part in the AB 12 program and other programs as well?**
The program restrictions are still being worked out, but it will depend on the requirements that are developed and the requirements of other programs as well.

**What would disqualify me from AB 12?**
You may be disqualified from the program if you no longer meet the program requirements (i.e. not working or not going to school), participating in a program that already provides housing, joining the military, getting married, etc. A list of disqualifying programs will be available in the future. When you meet program requirements again you may re-enter the program.

**What if I am a parent, can I still participate?**
Yes, youth who are parents have the same rights to participate in the program as other youth.

**If I am currently 18 years old or older can I participate in the program?**
If you turn 18 this year, you will not be eligible for this program, although you may be able to stay in care if you’re finishing your high school diploma as under existing law. If you turn 17 this year (2011) you will be eligible for participation in the program (see eligibility questions).

**Am I still eligible for the extension of care if I don’t have legal documents?**
Yes, in fact it is important that you make sure that you obtain all your papers before exiting care. AB 12 includes language that makes sure this continues to happen after age 18 if you have not exited care yet.

**Can I participate in THP-Plus and not be in AB 12?**
Yes, THP+ is available to all youth 18 to 24 for up to two years. Space is limited though so you are not guaranteed housing whether you are in or out of the AB 12 program.
PLACEMENT
What are my placement options?
You will have several options for housing:
- A home of a relative, non related legal guardian, or foster parent
- A group home setting up to age 19 (or possibly later if there is a documented medical reason)
- THP-Plus Foster Care Program
- Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP)

What is Supervised Independent Living?
Supervised Independent Living is a new placement option for youth. This placement option may include an apartment, college dormitory, or a shared roommate setting. In this setting payment will go directly to the youth participant.

If I want to leave my current placement at age 18, can I?
Yes, a youth can choose to remain in their current living setting or choose to live in another placement that is developed as part of their case plan.

Does my placement have to be approved?
Yes, if you live in a group home or a foster care placement (including a THP program) it must be licensed. If you live in a supervised independent living placement it must be approved by your caseworker.

BENEFITS
What benefits do I receive?
Financial assistance for housing will be provided to youth in one of the possible placement requirements (see placement options above). Participants will also receive case management. Depending on the placement a youth may receive the payment directly or it may be sent to the provider/caregiver.

How much money do I receive?
The amount of money is based on the placement option that the youth has chosen. If the youth decides to live in a Supervised Independent Living Setting (SILP) they will be provided the basic rate, which is currently $627.

If I live in an expensive area can I receive more money in a SILP placement?
No, every participant will receive the same amount of payment for a SILP placement.

What other benefits may I receive that are not related to AB 12?
- Medi Cal up until the age of 21
- Food Stamps
- Supplemental Security Income
- Financial Aid if you are enrolled in college
- Independent Living Program (ILP or ILSP) benefits up until the age your county allows
- A list of other support programs and services will be available in the coming months
AB 167: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I. Introduction to AB 167

Q1: What is AB 167?

Assembly Bill 167 (AB 167) refers to California legislation that amended section 51225.3 of the California Education Code (E.C.) to exempt pupils in foster care from school district graduation requirements that exceed state graduation requirements if the pupil transfers to the district, or transfers from one high school to another within a district in the 11th or 12th grade if the pupil would not be reasonably able to complete the additional district requirements. Approved by the Governor on October 11, 2009 and effective January 1, 2010, AB 167 requires school districts to provide notice to foster youth exempted from additional district requirements if failure to satisfy such local requirements will affect the pupil’s ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.

Q2: What is the definition of a “pupil in foster care”?

AB 167 refers to a “pupil in foster care” but does not itself define this phrase. Legislative history suggests that AB 167 was meant to cover the same class of children as those covered by AB 490, which defines a foster child as one who has been removed from his or her home pursuant to Section 309 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, is the subject of a petition filed under Section 300 or 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, or has been removed from his or her home and is the subject of a petition filed under Section 300 or 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. (E.C. 48853.5 (a)).

Q3: What problem does AB 167 seek to address?

California’s foster children are often bounced from placement to placement and from school to school. These transitions often result in education-related problems, including a loss of school credits, academic problems, and a delay in earning a high school diploma. Studies show high school pupils who change schools even once are less than 50 percent as likely to graduate from high school as compared to high school pupils who do not change schools.

California sets minimum high school graduation standards for the state’s school districts. However, school districts have flexibility with regard to additional coursework pupils are required to complete to graduate from high school. A foster child in high school forced to relocate to another school district in his or her junior or senior year may be faced with additional graduation requirements at his or her new school with little time to complete those courses in order to graduate with the rest of his or her class.
Q4: What are the minimum high school graduation standards required by California?

California requires pupils to complete all of the following one-year courses, unless otherwise specified, while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, in order to receive a diploma of graduation from high school (E.C. 51225.3(a)):

A. Three courses in English.
B. Two courses in mathematics. (Including one year of Algebra I unless previously completed, E.C. 51224.5)
C. Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.
D. Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-semester course in economics.
E. One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For the purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.
F. Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted.

Students may be exempted from physical education for a number of reasons. For example, if a student is ill or injured and a proper modified program cannot be provided for them or if a student is on a modified, half day schedule, they can apply for a temporary exemption. Additionally, students may be exempted from physical education for two years if they have met five of the six standards of California’s physical performance test given in ninth grade. (E.C. 51241(b)(1).) Permanent exemptions are granted if the student is 16 or older and has been in the tenth grade for at least one academic year, is a postgraduate pupil, or is enrolled in a juvenile home, ranch, camp, or forestry camp school where physical recreation and exercise is provided pursuant to California requirements. (E.C. 51241 (c)(1)(2)(3)).

In addition to completing the coursework above, a pupil must receive passing scores on both California High School Exit Exams – English and Math. (E.C. 60851) Foster youth exempted from local graduation requirements by AB 167 must satisfy the above to receive a diploma of graduation. (E.C. 51225.3(c)).

Additional information regarding the state minimum graduation requirements can be found on the California Department of Education Website at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hsgrmin.asp.

II. To Whom Does AB 167 Apply?
Q5: Does AB 167 apply to all foster youth?
No. AB 167 applies only to pupils in foster care who transfer into a district or between high schools within the district while they are in 11th or 12th grade, unless the school district makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits. (E.C. 51225.3(c)).

Q6: Does AB 167 apply if the school district to which the youth transferred has the same graduation requirements as the school district from where they came? Likewise, does AB 167 apply if the school to which the youth transferred has the same graduation requirements as his or her previous school?
Education Code section 51225.3 makes no reference to the requirements of the school or school district from the school the foster youth came from. The requirements of the prior school or school district do not affect whether AB 167 applies to a pupil in foster care. AB 167 applies to every pupil in foster care who transfers schools or school districts during his or her 11th or 12th grade year, unless the school district makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits.

Q7: Does AB 167 apply to foster youth who transferred prior to the passage of AB 167?
Legislative language makes clear that AB 167 applies to all currently enrolled foster youth who transferred in the 11th or 12th grade, regardless of when the transfer occurred.

Q8: Who determines whether a foster youth transferring into a new school or school district is in 11th or 12th grade?
There is no state-mandated method for determining a student’s grade level. This decision is left up to the school district and, in some cases, individual schools. Many school districts have established guidelines to determine a student’s grade level. Often times a student’s grade level in high school is determined by the number of credits he or she has received. Other times, the student’s age determines his or her grade level. Thus, the number of credits a student possesses might determine whether AB 167 applies to him or her in that it might determine whether he or she is in 11th or 12th grade.

Q9: Does AB 167 apply to a foster youth transferring to a new school district or school during his or her 10th grade summer?
A student’s grade level is determined by his or her school or school district. Many school districts base this determination upon the number of credits the student has received. Thus, in most cases, a student is an 11th grader from the moment he/she has sufficient credits to qualify as such. This means that a typical student will be an “11th grader” the summer after their 10th grade year, unless credit deficient.

**Q10: If a foster youth is an 11th grader and meets all of the minimum state requirements can the district award a high school diploma under the AB 167 exemption?**

Yes, as long as the minimum state requirements were met and the school district makes a finding that the pupil is not reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits. It is important, however, to consider whether graduating in the 11th grade is in the foster youth’s best interest. Such a decision might negatively impact their ability to secure housing and other benefits. In such a case best practice is to enroll the student in elective courses, ROP or vocational training.

**Q11: If a foster youth changes schools prior to the end of the semester and has met the minimum state requirements, do they need to complete the semester or is the district obligated to grant the diploma at that time under AB 167?**

AB 167 does not obligate school districts to grant diplomas mid-semester or at any other time. Diplomas are awarded at times determined by school district policies and procedures. Thus, a district may grant a transferring foster youth a diploma prior to the end of the school year if the student has completed the minimum state requirements and the district makes a finding that the pupil is not reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits.

III.“Reasonably Able to Complete the Additional Requirements”

**Q12: Is every foster youth who transfers during 11th or 12th grade exempt from the additional requirements imposed by their new school district?**

No. AB 167 applies to pupils in foster care who transfer during 11th or 12th grade, but, if a school district “makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits pursuant to state law,” then the foster youth must complete these additional requirements in order to graduate. (E.C. 51225.3(c))
Q13: When should a school district evaluate whether it is reasonable for the pupil to complete any additional graduation requirements?
It is best practice for a school district to assess whether a pupil in foster care transferring into the district or between high schools in the 11th or 12th grade is able to meet the district’s additional requirements as soon after the transfer as possible. The AB 490 District Liaison can assist the pupil in requesting a “graduation check” at the school site.

Q14: May a school district reconsider its “reasonableness” finding?
Given a district’s limited familiarity with a recent transeree, it is best practice to reevaluate their reasonableness finding in light of the student’s performance post-transfer. While a district might have initially thought it reasonable for the youth to complete their additional requirements, post-transfer evidence might suggest otherwise.

Note – the inquiry should always be: could the student have reasonably completed the additional graduation requirements at the time he or she transferred. Post-transfer events might shed additional light on this question, but the inquiry never becomes: can the student reasonably complete the additional graduation requirements given post-transfer events.

However, once a school district has determined that a pupil in foster care is not reasonably able to complete the district’s additional graduation requirements and notifies the pupil of such finding, it could be problematic to subsequently require the pupil to complete the additional requirements if there is not sufficient time to do so prior to graduation. If a district subsequently determines that the pupil can reasonably complete the additional requirements in time to graduate with his/her class and sufficient notice is provided to the pupil, then the district may reconsider/revoke the exemption.

Q15: What efforts are reasonable to expect of a pupil in foster care trying to complete a school district’s additional graduation requirements?
Neither AB 167 nor any other provision of California’s Education Code answers this question with any specificity. However, Education Code section 51225.3(c) requires that the pupil be “reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits”. The determination as to whether the pupil is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements should be made on an individual case-by-case basis. The school district should consider the courses
completed/credits earned, the additional district requirements, and the amount of time remaining before graduation while the pupil continues to be eligible for foster care benefits.

Some school districts have suggested the following “best practice”:

1. In determining whether a newly transferred pupil in foster care will be able to reasonably satisfy the district’s additional graduation requirements, the district and the district’s foster youth liaison, should consult with the youth, the youth’s educational rights holder, child welfare worker, and anyone else familiar with the foster youth and his/her educational history.
2. As the school district learns more about the pupil, the district should reevaluate whether the student is reasonably able to satisfy the district’s additional graduation requirements.

Q16: What timeframe should the school district use in deciding whether the pupil will be able to reasonably meet the district’s additional requirements?

The school district must determine whether the pupil is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits pursuant to state law. (E.C. 51225.3(c)). All foster youth are eligible for foster care benefits through their 18th birthday. Depending on their circumstance, some foster youth remain eligible for foster care benefits through their 19th birthday. These youth may opt to cease receiving foster care benefits once they turn 18.

If the district determines that the pupil is reasonably able to complete its additional requirements in time for the pupil to graduate from high school and before turning age 18, it need not exempt the pupil from its additional requirements. If the district determines that the pupil is reasonably able to meet its additional requirements before turning age 19, it need not exempt the youth if the youth’s child welfare worker confirms that the youth will remain eligible for foster care benefits through his or her 19th birthday.

Q17: Can a school district refuse to award a transferee foster youth a diploma because he or she lacks the number of credits required by the district?

No. The statewide graduation requirements make no mention of credits; credit requirements are local requirements. Thus, if a foster youth transfers schools or school districts in the 11th or 12th grade and cannot reasonably complete the additional local graduation requirements, including any requirements related to credits, then they should be awarded a diploma as long as they’ve satisfied
California’s graduation requirements, regardless of the number of credits possessed by the foster youth.

IV. School and School District Duties

Q18: What must a school district do if it determines that a pupil in foster care will be exempt from its additional requirements?

The school district must notify the pupil and, as appropriate, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil, if any of the requirements that are waived “will affect the pupil’s ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.” (E.C. 51225.3(c)).

Q19: Are there times when a school district might exempt a pupil in foster care from its additional requirements but not provide notice to the pupil?

AB 167 requires the district to provide notice “if any of the requirements that are waived will affect the pupil’s ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.” (E.C. 51225.3(c)). Although not all of the additional requirements imposed by school districts are necessary to gain admission to postsecondary educational institutions, all are likely to affect a pupil’s ability to gain admission. Thus, in practice, school districts always should provide notice to the pupil.

Q20: To whom must the school district provide notice?

A school district must provide notice to the pupil in foster care and, as appropriate, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil. (E.C. 51225.3(c)). Although it is likely that it will be appropriate to notify the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil, the school district should determine on an individual case-by-case basis, if it is appropriate to provide notice to this person. In many cases it might also be best practice to notify the youth’s caregiver.

Q21: Is the diploma awarded to a pupil in foster care who graduates without having satisfied the school district’s additional requirements different from that awarded students who do satisfy such additional requirements?

AB 167 recognizes that some foster youth transferring in the 11th or 12th grade, through no fault of their own, are not able to complete the additional requirements of their new school district. AB 167 provides an exemption for these students, allowing those who cannot reasonably fulfill the district’s additional requirements to obtain a diploma of graduation. While AB 167 says
nothing about a district’s ability to award special certificates to students who fulfill additional requirements, foster youth falling under AB 167’s exemption must receive the same diploma of graduation as all other students in that district.

Q22: How does this impact a child who has an IEP?
Under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and California law, a student eligible for special education services is required to have a transition plan upon turning 16 years old that addresses post secondary goals, including whether the student will graduate with a regular high school diploma. Thus, whenever a student is receiving special education services the applicability of AB 167 should be addressed in the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting.

Q23: Are there sample School Board policies available regarding AB 167?
California School Boards Association (CSBA) provides the following sample policies for subscribers of their Policy Services. Please visit CSBA’s Web site (http://www.csba.org) or go directly to their online sample policy service, GAMUT Online (http://www.gamutonline.net). A complimentary copy of the sample board policy and administrative regulations 6173.1 “Education for Foster Youth” is available at www.csba.org under the Education Section, under Foster Youth.

AR 6146.1 – Administrative Regulation, High School Graduation Requirements  
BP 6146.1 – Board Policy, High School Graduation Requirements  
AR 6146.3 – Administrative Regulation, Reciprocity Of Academic Credit  
BP 6146.3 – Board Policy, Reciprocity Of Academic Credit  
AR 6173.1 - Administrative Regulation, Education for Foster Youth  
BP 6173.1 – Board Policy, Education for Foster Youth
Risk Factors
Foster Care: Risk Factors

Current research indicates that residential and school placement changes often result in negative behavioral, social/emotional, and/or academic outcomes for children in foster care. This hand-out lists risk-factors for children who transition into foster care.

Behavioral:
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, and AD/HD are among the most common lifetime diagnoses among a sample of 188 14 to 17-year-old children in the foster care system (Pecora, 2012)
- Maladaptive behaviors, which may result in suspension (Hemphil & Hargreaves, 2009)
- Substance abuse (Braciszewski & Stout, 2012)

Social/Emotional:
- Difficulty developing social relationships (Ward, 2011)
- Increased risk for depression, anxiety, and other internalizing issues (Merrell, 2008)
- Major Depressive Disorder, Major Depressive Episode, and Panic Attack are among the most common lifetime diagnoses among a sample of 188 14 to 17-year-old children in the foster care system (Pecora, 2012)
- Lack the ability to form attachments, or develop unhealthy attachments (Harden, 2004)
- Maltreatment (sexual, emotional, physical, verbal, neglect) (Auslander, Edmond, Elize, McMillen, & Thompson, 2002; Pecora, 2012; Pears, Kim, & Fisher, 2008)

Academic:
- High dropout rates (Pecora, 2012)
- High rate of grade retention (National, 2011)
- Below grade-level performance in all academic areas (Zetlin et al., 2010)
- Negative perception of school (Sullivan et al., 2010)
Support Services
Check In/Check Out
Teacher Information

1. The CICO program consists of the following components:
   - Morning “check in” with ______ in room _____
   - Teacher feedback 3-5 times each day
   - Afternoon “check out” with ______ in room _____
   - Daily home report

2. Each morning, the student will walk directly to room ___ to check in. The student will receive his/her daily point card. In addition, the daily home report will be turned in. If the student comes to class before checking in, please provide a reminder to go to room ___.

3. During the day, you will provide feedback to the student in the form of points. A “3” indicates great job, a “2” indicates okay, and a “1” indicates a hard time. Please mark the student’s card at the appropriate time, and provide specific verbal feedback about the rating.

4. At the end of the day, the student will walk to room ____ to check out. There are several students who need to check out, so please send the student down at the appropriate time. The student will then turn in the card, points will be recorded, and the home report will be completed.

5. Data will be graphed on a regular basis. Copies of the student’s graph will be placed in your mailbox. Please contact _____ if it appears that the program is not working, or if you have other concerns.

Typical Problems and Solutions

1. The student forgets to “check in”
   This is very common, especially for younger students. If the student arrives, and forgets to check in, send him/her to room 11. It is important that the student checks in. If the problem becomes consistent (2-3 days per week), contact Carissa or Amy and we come up with a plan.

2. The student loses the card
   Pick a place in the classroom to keep the card. You may also tape the card to the student’s desk. Provide verbal reminders to the student to “remember your card”. Do not allow the student to carry the card to lunch or recess unless it is necessary. Start a new card (in your package).

3. The student “loses” the card if they are having a bad day
   If the student says that the card is lost after having a bad day, begin to use a new card. If you remember the ratings that you previously gave, record on the new card. Keep the card with you for the rest of the day, but still briefly meet with the student to provide the ratings and feedback.

4. The student arrives late to school
   Begin a card (from the packet) and start when the student arrived. When the student arrives, explain that you will start the card, and that they may turn in the home report during check out.

5. The student becomes angry, and throws the card or rips it up
   Discontinue the card for the day. Explain that having the card is a special privilege, and they must not destroy it. The student should still check out at the end of the day if possible.

Check in Check out Agreement

**Student Responsibilities:**
1. Remember to go to check in and check out in room __
2. Keep track of CICO card
3. Be safe while walking down to room __
4. Bring signed home report everyday

**Teacher Responsibilities:**
1. Provide a rating at designated times
2. Provide reminders to attend check in and check out
3. Provide support and encouragement to the student
4. Provide updates to CICO staff

**CICO Staff Responsibilities:**
1. Check students in and out
2. Provide CICO cards and home report
3. Provide updates to classroom teachers

__________________________
CICO Staff

__________________________
Teacher

__________________________
Student

TIPS for Providing Feedback during Check-in, Check-out and In Class

**Things to say at check in…**
- Wow! You brought back your CICO Report signed!
- You’re here on time again -Great!
- Looks like you’re all set to go
- It’s great to see you this morning
- Looks like you’re ready for a good day
- You’re off to a good start
- You look so nice this morning
- You look happy to be here this morning
- I like the way you said “good morning”
- Thanks for coming to check in
- Sounds like you had a good weekend
- We missed you yesterday (if student was absent), nice to see you today

**Things to say at check out….**
- You had a great (awesome, terrific, etc) day!
- You’re right on target
- Your mom/dad is going to be so proud of you
- You’re really working hard!
- You are such a good student
- You made your goal- wow!
- Looks like today didn’t go so well- I know you can do it tomorrow
- I know it was a tough day- thanks for coming to check out
- We all have bad days once and awhile- I know you can do it tomorrow
- You look a little frustrated- what happened?*
  *If a student looks upset take a few minutes to “just listen”
- Looks like you were having some trouble today. I know you can turn it around tomorrow.

CICO Record

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Respectful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check In</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Recess</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Lunch</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Recess</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check Out</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today’s goal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Today’s total points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 = Need work, 1 = “OK”, 2 = Nice Job

## Daily Progress

Student: ___________________  Date: ___________  Teacher: _______________

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Be Safe</th>
<th>Be Respectful</th>
<th>Be Your Personal Best</th>
<th>Teacher initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be Safe</td>
<td>Keep hands, feet, and objects to self</td>
<td>Use kind words and actions</td>
<td>Follow directions</td>
<td>Working in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
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<td>Recess</td>
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<td>0 1 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Points = 50  
Points Possible = 50  
Today _________ %  
Goal _________ %
CICO Home Report

Name: ____________________________
Date: ____________

_____ I met my goal today _____ I had a hard day

One thing I did really well today was: ____________________________

Something I will work on tomorrow is: ____________________________

Comments:
Anger Thermometer

Instead of telling you the temperature, this thermometer gauges how angry you are. At the bottom of the thermometer you feel calm. Then, the thermometer shows when you start to feel a little annoyed or frustrated. Then, you may get angry at the next stage. The last stage of the thermometer represents when your anger is out of control.

Use this thermometer to identify what makes you feel this way. Then, identify coping strategies to use at each level. You should use your coping strategies at the earliest level possible so that you do not go all the way up the thermometer into the furious level. Specifically, you should do your coping strategies when you are frustrated or angry to avoid becoming furious.
Anger Thermometer - Triggers

Write 2 things or situations that make you feel each of the emotions listed below.

Furious
1. 
   
2. 
   
Angry
1. 
   
2. 
   
Frustrated
1. 
   
2. 
   
Calm
1. 
   
2. 
   
Write down 2 things you can do to make yourself feel better (coping strategies) at each elevated level on the anger thermometer. Use the list of 20 coping strategies if you need ideas.

**Furious**
1. 
2. 

**Angry**
1. 
2. 

**Frustrated**
1. 
2. 

**Calm**
1. 
2. 
Bibliotherapy Books


This picture book is written and illustrated by the Stefon Herbert when he was six years-old. He shares his fears about leaving his foster family to move in with a new adoptive family. The narration is very simple and child friendly that may help young readers feel that they are not alone in missing their foster parents. This book is appropriate for children 4 years and older.


This picture book depicts Choco, a young bird living alone in the forest, looking for his mother. Choco is set in finding his mother. He asked all kinds of animals who had similar physical characteristics as him. However, all the animals he met differed greatly in appearance from him. Finally, Mrs. Bear who looks nothing like Choco turns out to be the perfect mother for him. Thus this book teaches children that they do not need to look like their foster (or adoptee) parents to be loved. This book is appropriate for children 4 years and older.


This picture book addresses the questions, feelings, and concerns children in foster care most often face. It provides basic information that children want and need to know such as: describing the roles of social workers, judges, lawyers, and therapists. The last section of the book has “A Note to Foster Parents and Other Adults” that is there to guide adults who are working with foster children. This book is appropriate for children in first grade and up.


This picture book depicts a young fruit bat that is separated from her mother. She quickly learns that not all winged animals eat fruit. Stellaluna finds her way into a bird nest where she learns to eat worms. She adapts to the habits of her new family such as sleeping at night, eating insects, and standing on tree branches. This book is appropriate for children ages 4 and older.


This picture book helps explain why some children move to foster homes, what foster parents do, and ways children may feel during foster care. It is important to note that this book addresses that the troubles in the child’s life is not their fault. The last section of the book offers resources and information for adults working with children in foster care. This book is appropriate for children 4 years and older.

Murphy is a puppy who is constantly being relocated to different families (well only three families). He attempts to be a “good” puppy so that his foster family will keep him, but something always goes wrong. Finally he gives up trying to be “good” and finds a family that loves him unconditionally. Murphy’s situation helps children in foster care identify with the circumstances, thoughts, and feelings Murphy experienced. This book is appropriate for children 4 years and older.


This picture book tells the story of a kitten (Zachary) whose dad disappears and mom is bad to him. He is then placed in a foster home and later adopted by a family of swans. The book explores experiences, problems, and emotions that children in foster care will relate to. This book is appropriate for children 5 years and older.


Kit is a young girl who is taken from her mother and placed in a foster home. The story follows her as she enters foster care and deals with emotions and questions that arise in living in a foster home. This book is appropriate for children 4 years and older.


Billy is placed under the care of his grandmother, however she unexpectedly passes away. Thus the story *Bill Had to Move* begins to unfold. Billy must learn to cope with the loss of his grandmother and adjust to his new environment. This book is appropriate for children who have experienced the same or similar situation. It is recommended for those in third grade and up. It is a lengthy book (32 pages).


This book explains what foster care is in simple easy to understand terminology. It allows young children to express their feelings and adjust to the new setting. The great thing about the book is that it is in a coloring book format. This book is appropriate for children ages 5 to 11.
Debriefing and Reflection Assignment (Immediate)
As this image, this can see as (a) an assessment for the student and function of behavior. (b) a chance for the child to gain awareness of the function of their own behavior.

Assess Function of Behavior
* Use information obtained from the (un鸩储) debriefing and reflection assignments, in addition to as much data as can be obtained from: (a) student interviews, (b) student observations, (c) teacher interviews, and (d) parent interviews
* Assess whether the behavior is due to defiance/making bad choices, skill/idle deficits, or social/emotional need

Is the behavior a result of:
Making Bad Choices?
("won’t do" versus "can’t do."
E.g., poor conflict on behavior walks)

Skill/Ability Deficit?
("can’t do" versus "won’t do."
E.g., having children or get attention because they lack skills to initiate poor interactions)

Social/Emotional Need?
(e.g., manifesting anger in a parent divorce with aggression at school?)

Applicable Interventions
* Behavior contracts (giving concrete outline of behavioral expectations)
* Natural consequences (students learn how their behaviors affect others)
* Self-management plans (can facilitate student ownership and skill motivating mindfulness)
* Debriefing/reflection assignments (learning component; students learn purpose of specific rules and conseuences of non-following rules)
* Parent involvement (various strategies discussed can hold parents accountable)

Applicable Interventions
* Self-management plans (can facilitate teaching student appropriate behaviors)
* Social/emotional training (teaching of behavioral expectations and social skills can fill the skill/ability deficit)
* Parent involvement (various strategies can be shared with parents to facilitate generalization of skills; parent training for specific skills may also be influential)

Applicable Interventions
* Consulting (social/emotional issues can be addressed within the context of consulting; strategies can be discussed and referrals can subsequently be made if necessary)
* Self-management plans (can facilitate teaching student appropriate behaviors)
* Parent involvement (appropriate referrals can be made for parent, family, and individual student resources)
Web Resources for Teachers  
Working with Students in Foster Care

IRIS Center  

Ready to Succeed in the Classroom  
http://www.cftl.org/

US Department of Health & Human Services (AFCARS)  

California Ed Facts  
http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/ceffosteryouth.asp

California Youth Foster Care Education  
http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/pdfs/CAFYETFFactsheets.pdf

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning  

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports  
http://www.Pbis.org

California Department of Education  
http://www.cde.ca.gov

Committee for Children  
www.cfchildren.org/second-step.aspx

Child Protective Services Report Form  

California Youth Law  
www.youthlaw.org

California Youth Connection  
http://www.calyouthconn.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway (Sexual Abuse)  

California Department of Social Services  
http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/PUB132.pdf
SEL Curricula

**Second Step: Social-Emotional Skills for Early Learning** is designed specifically for multiple-age early learning classrooms. The program is taught through 28 weekly themes that include five- to seven-minute activities to be taught throughout the week. The Skills for Learning unit teaches self-regulation and focusing attention. Additional units cover empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, problem solving, and transitioning to kindergarten.

Activities, Brain Builder games, and small-group work keep children engaged and help them practice their skills. Boy and Girl puppets encourage participation. The easy-to-use Teaching Guide, found online, includes instructions for teaching and reinforcing the weekly theme activities and provides video examples from real classrooms.

**Steps to Respect** works on a school-wide level. That means it starts with administrators taking stock of their bullying policies and procedures and creating a baseline using surveys and existing data to track progress. Next, all adults in the school—from bus drivers to cafeteria workers to teachers—are trained in recognizing and dealing with bullying. Once this groundwork is laid, the classroom lessons can begin—and kids learn how to make friends; recognize feelings; and recognize, refuse, and report bullying.

**Strong Kids** programs are brief and practical social-emotional learning curricula designed for teaching social and emotional skills, promoting resilience, strengthening assets, and increasing coping skills of children and adolescents. Developed by researchers at the University of Oregon, these programs are developmentally appropriate and span the K-12 age range. These programs are aimed at both prevention and early intervention, and have a wide range of applications. Strong Kids may be used effectively with high functioning, typical, at-risk, or emotionally-behaviorally disordered students in a variety of settings.

http://www.cfchildren.org/
http://strongkids.uoregon.edu/
References


K. Parker & C. Otterson, Personal Communication, March 20, 2013


http://miblsi.cenmi.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jr5PFU7FTaA=&tabid=739

National Working Group on Foster Care and Education. (2011). *Education is the lifeline for youth in foster care*. [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from


