

THE INVISIBLE ACHIEVEMENT GAP, PART 2:

*How the Foster Care Experiences of
California's Public School Students Are
Associated with Their Education Outcomes*

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July 15th

*National Working
Group on Foster Care
and Education*

AGENDA

FROM A TO Z

- Students in foster care
- Finding 1: At-risk subgroup
- Finding 2: Mobility
- Finding 3: School Type
- Finding 4: Testing Participation
- Finding 5: Achievement Gap
- Finding 6: Drop-out/Graduation
- Summary



The Invisible Achievement Gap

*How the Foster Care Experiences of California
Public School Students Are Associated with
Their Education Outcomes*

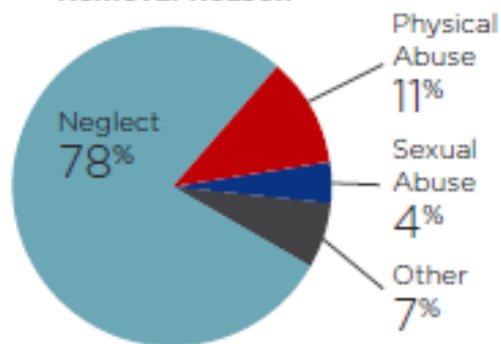
STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE 2009/2010

BY THE NUMBERS

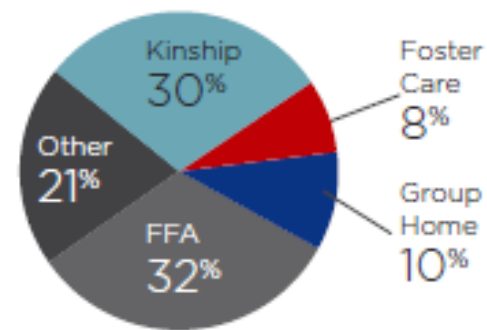
More than 43,000—or about 1 of every 150—K–12 public-school students in California spent some period of time in child welfare supervised foster care.

Elementary: 40%
Middle: 23%
High School: 36%

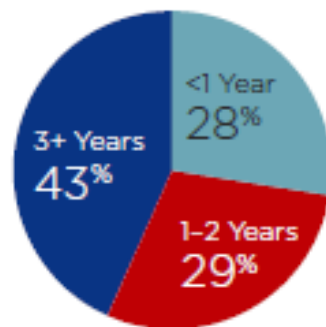
Removal Reason



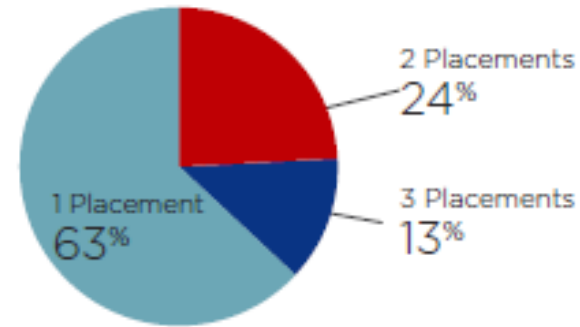
Placement Type



Time in Care



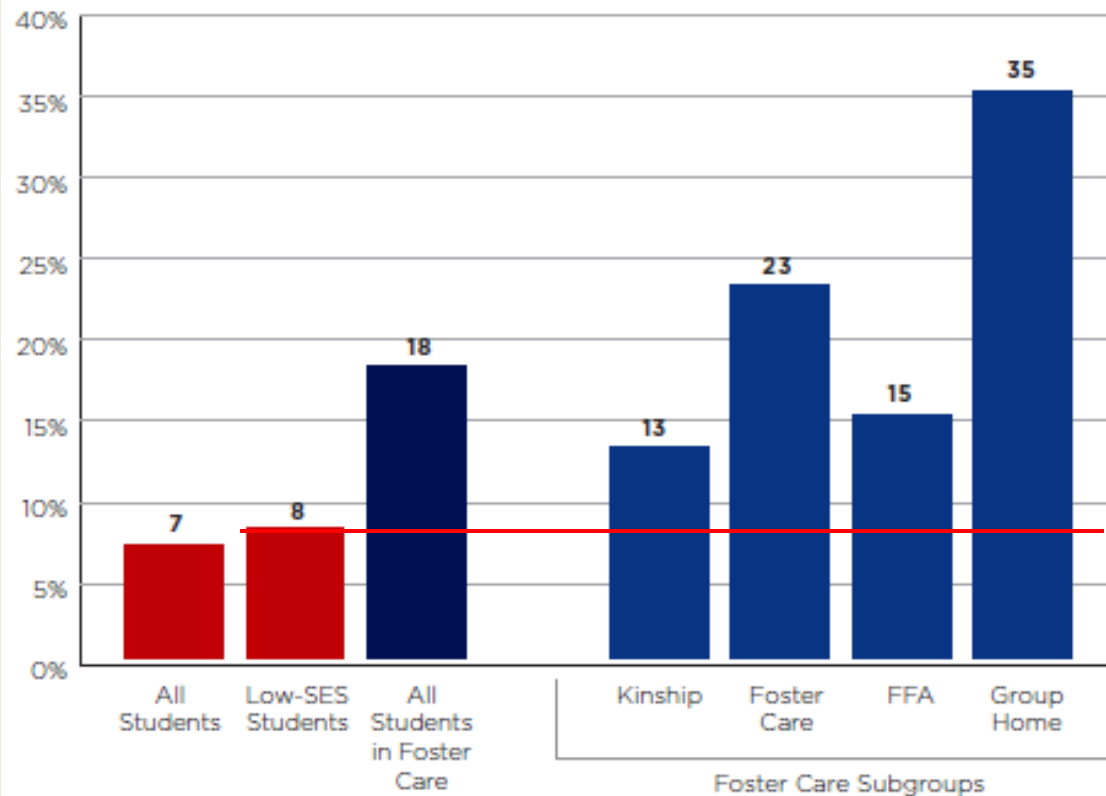
Number of Placements



FINDING 1

AT RISK SUBGROUP

Students in foster care constituted an at-risk subgroup that was distinct from low-SES students. Students in every type of foster care placement lagged significantly behind their peers who were not in foster care.

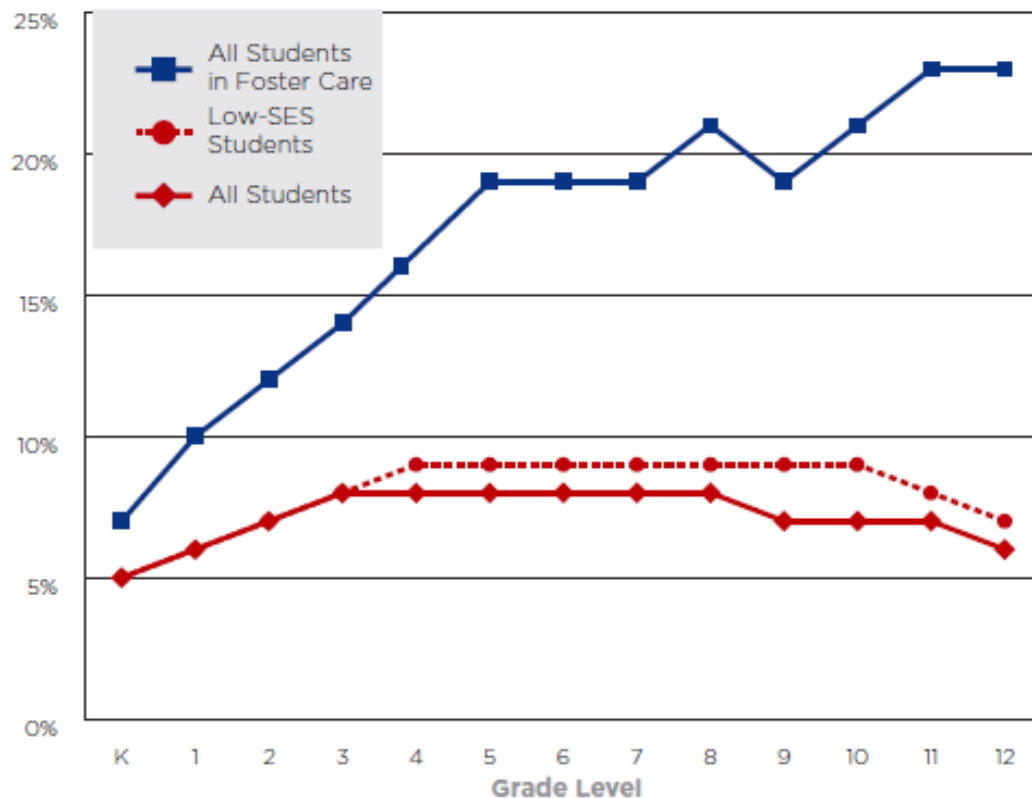


“Regardless of the characteristics of their foster care experience, students in foster care remained a distinctively disadvantaged subgroup”

FINDING 1

AT RISK SUBGROUP

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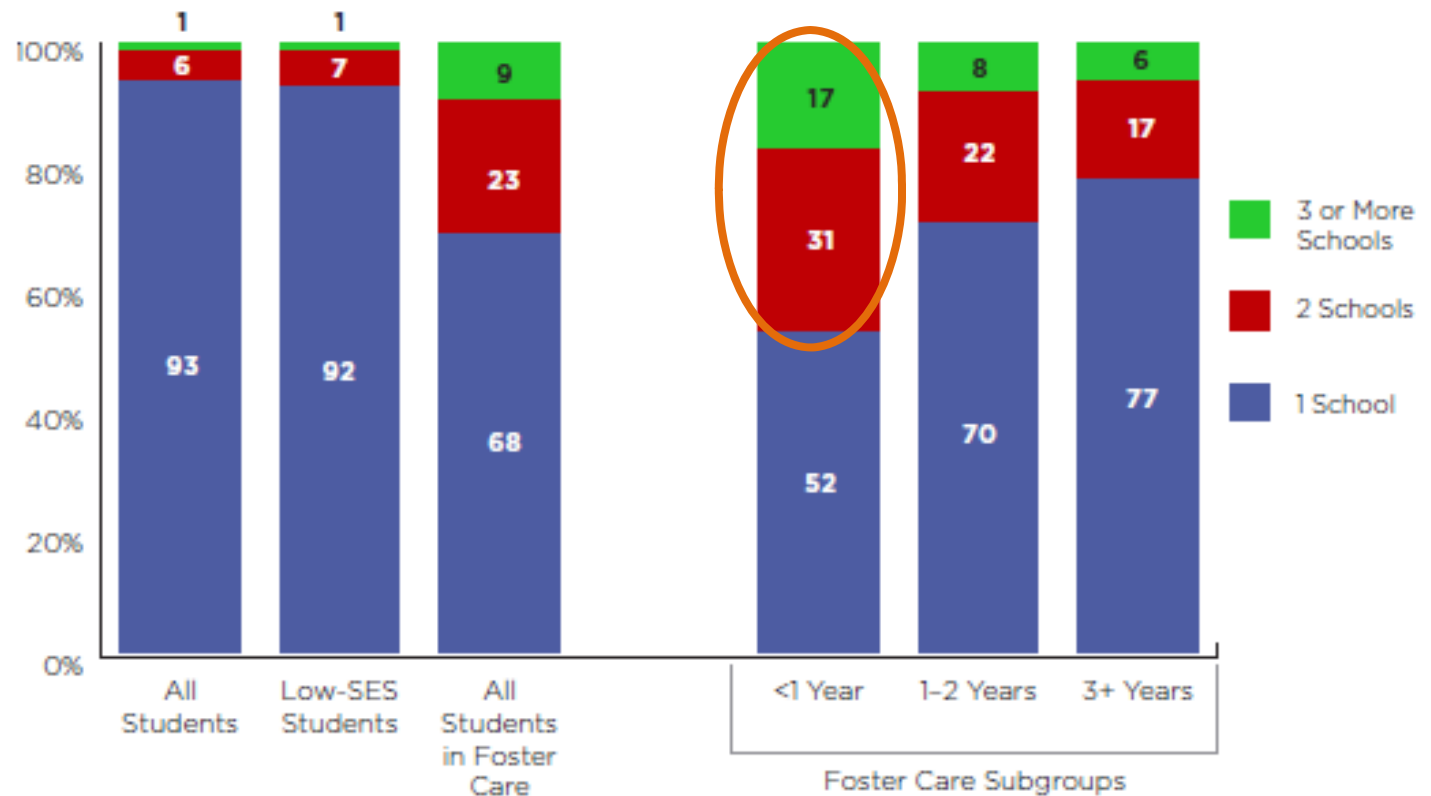
*“...students in foster care were more likely to be **diagnosed with a disability**, to be over-age for their grade level, and to fare worse academically”*

FINDING 2

MOBILITY

Students in foster care were more likely than other students to change schools during the school year. School mobility was tied to a recent entry into foster care and the restrictiveness of the foster care placement setting.

“Among students who had been in foster care for less than one year, 17 percent were enrolled in three or more schools during the academic year.”

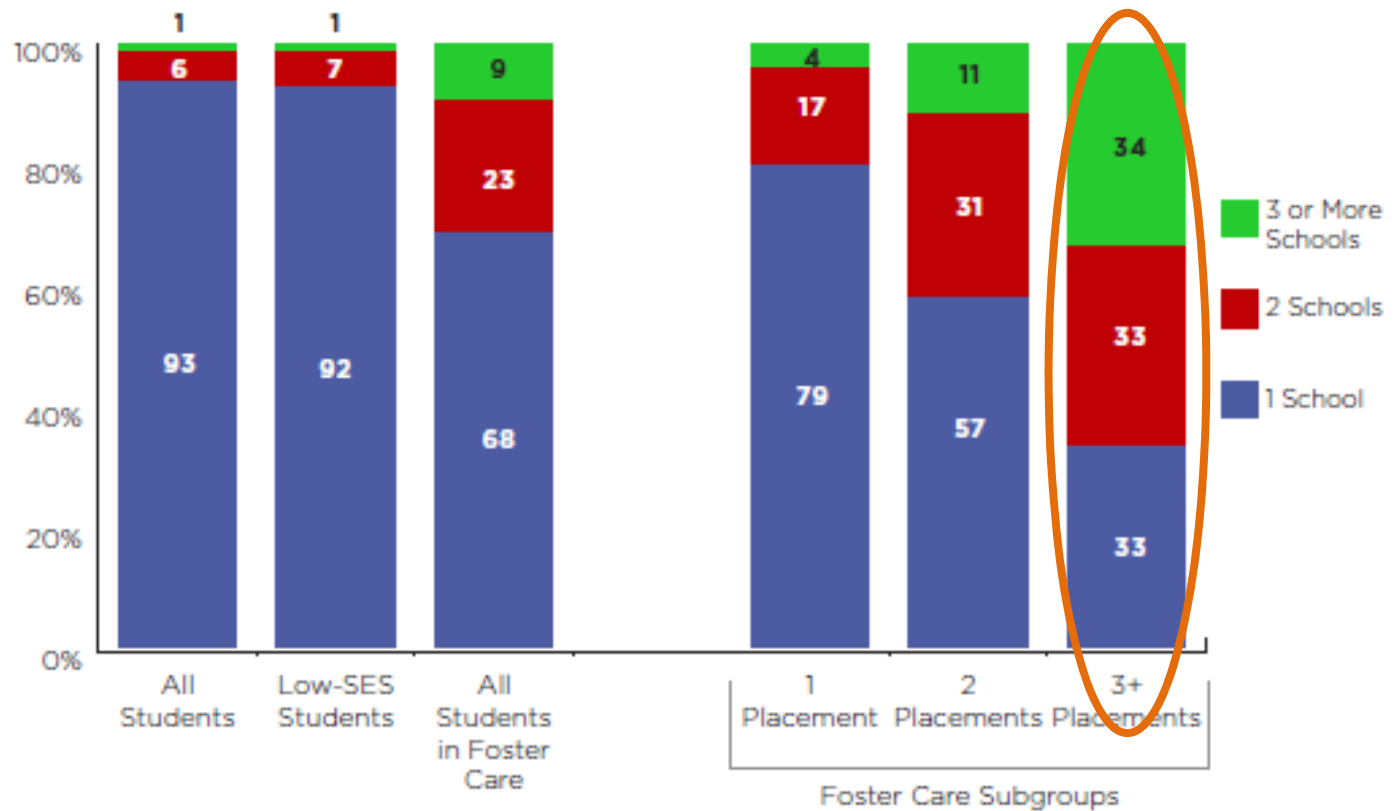


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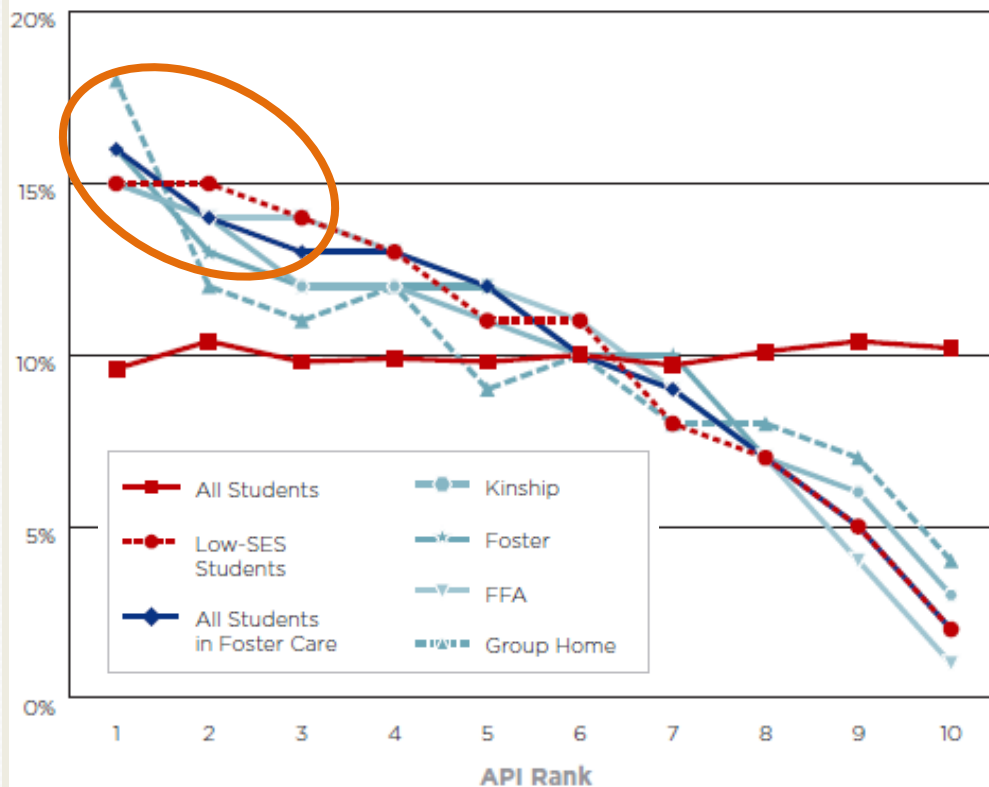
“The number of foster placements during the school year was also, not surprisingly, associated with the number of school placements.”



FINDING 3

SCHOOL TYPE

Students in foster care were more likely than the general population of students to be enrolled in the lowest-performing schools and more likely to be enrolled in nontraditional schools. By high school, one in five students in foster care were attending a nontraditional school.

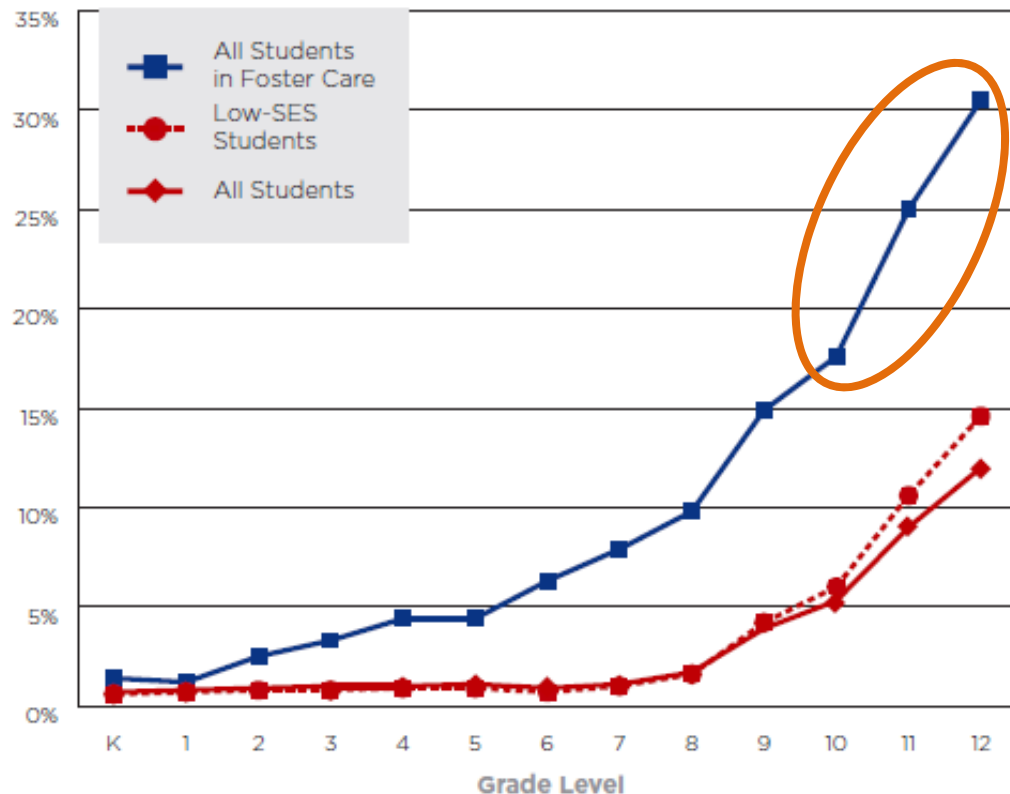


“Regardless of the foster care placement type, 41 to 42% of foster care students were in schools whose performance was in the lowest three API state rank deciles.”

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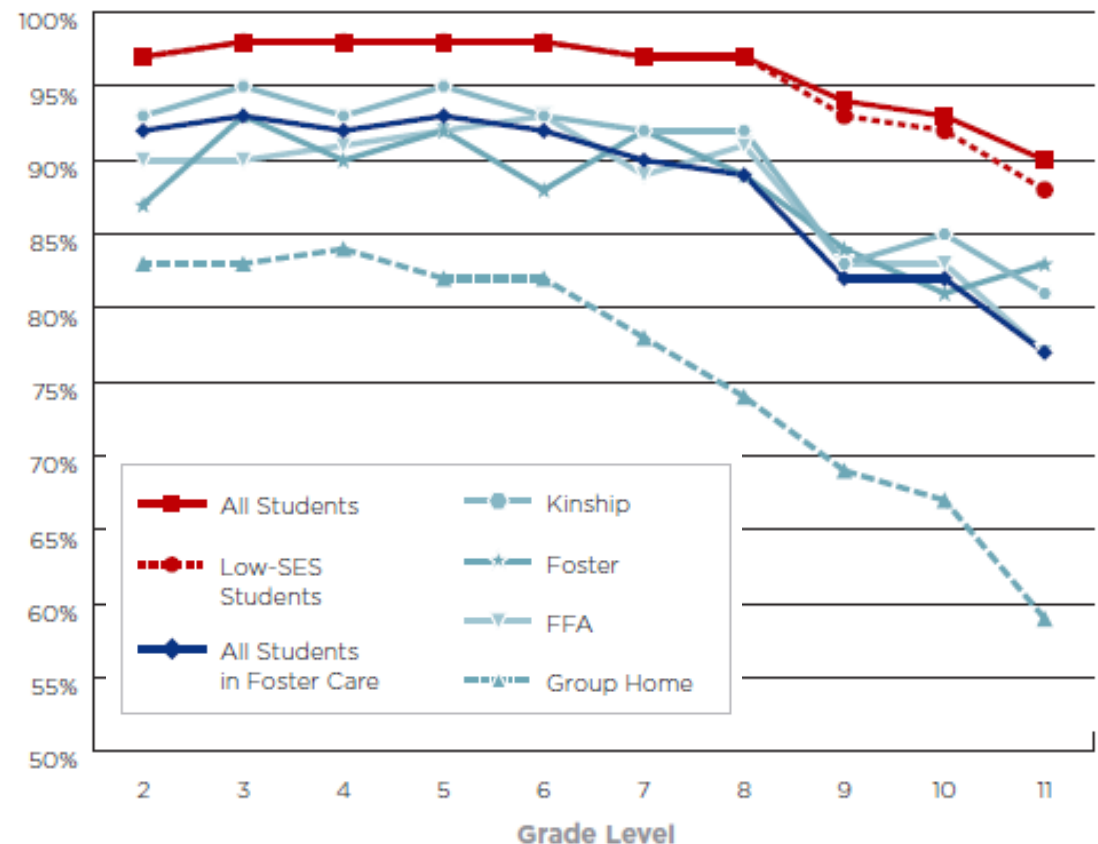
“Enrollment in a nontraditional school often suggests that students were unsuccessful in a traditional school setting and were therefore transferred to an alternative setting to better meet students’ needs.”

FINDING 4

TESTING PARTICIPATION

Students in foster care had the lowest participation rate in California's statewide testing program and participation was tied to placement instability.

"Student placement type was correlated with test participation throughout all grade levels, but became more pronounced in higher grades."

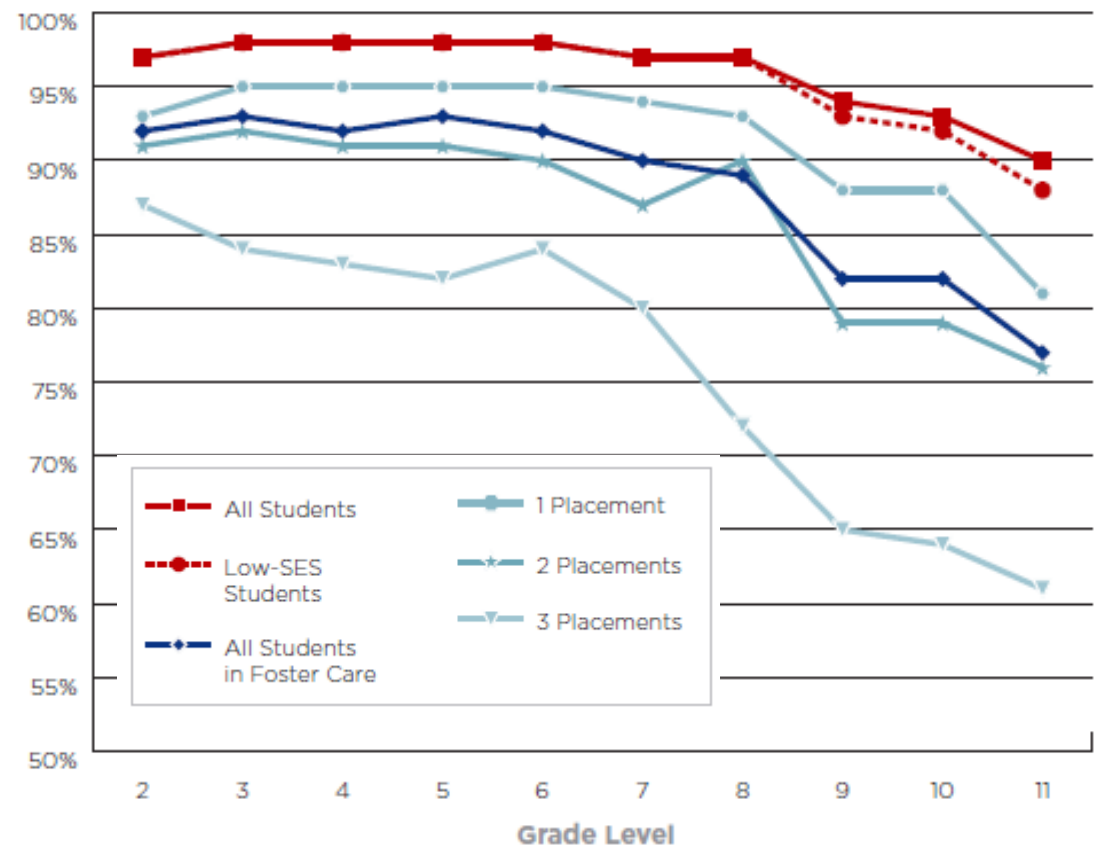


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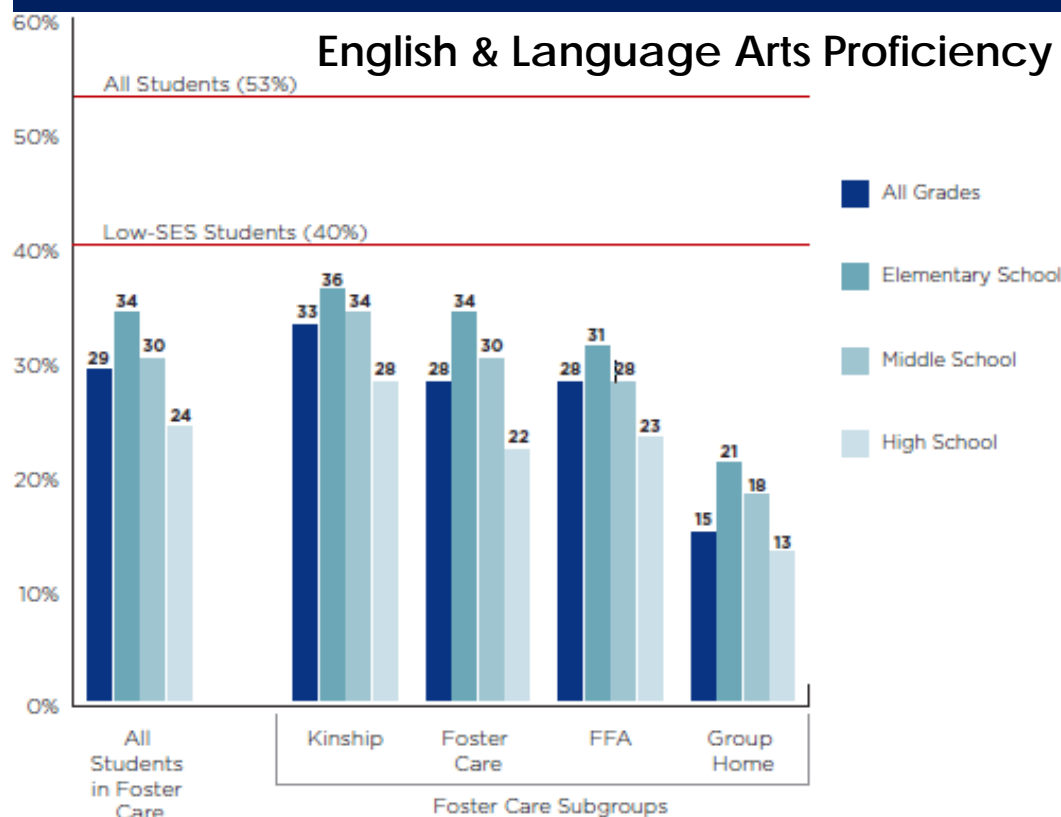
"...91% of students who experienced only one placement during the school year, 86% of students who experienced two placements, and only 73% of students who experienced three or more placements participated in testing."



FINDING 5

ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Statewide testing documented an achievement gap for students in foster care. Educational disadvantage was greatest in upper grade levels, among students in group homes, and for students who experienced three or more placements.

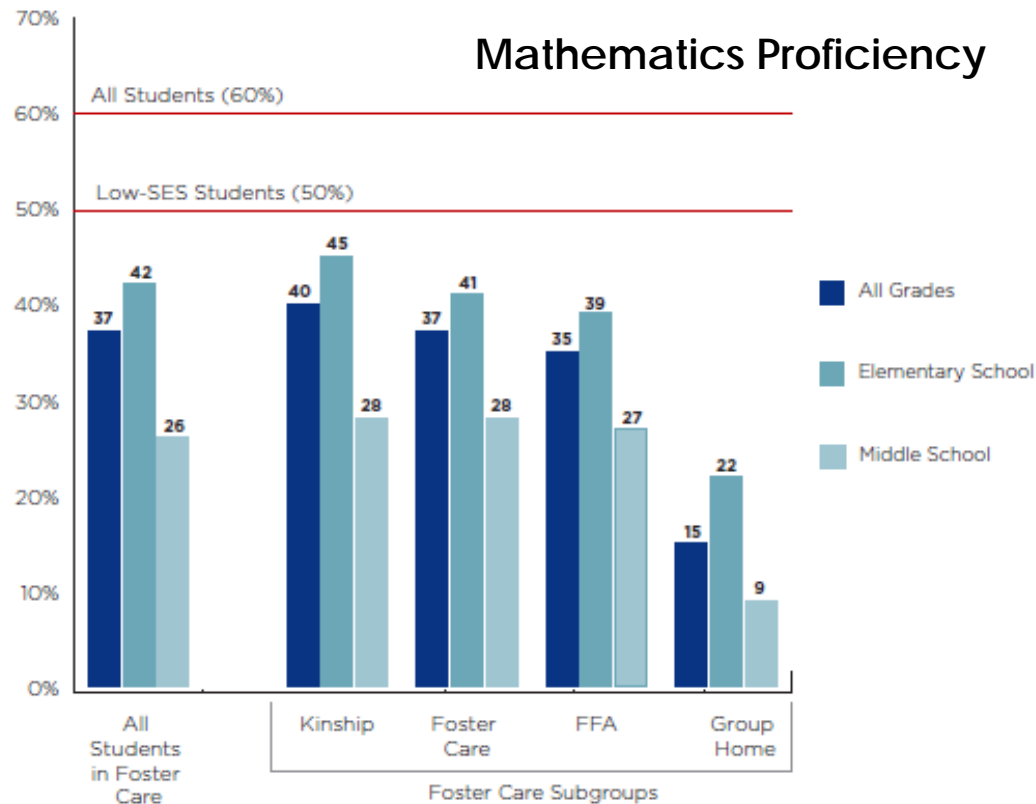


“At the high school level, only 13 percent of students placed in group homes tested at proficient or above in English language arts.”

FINDING 5

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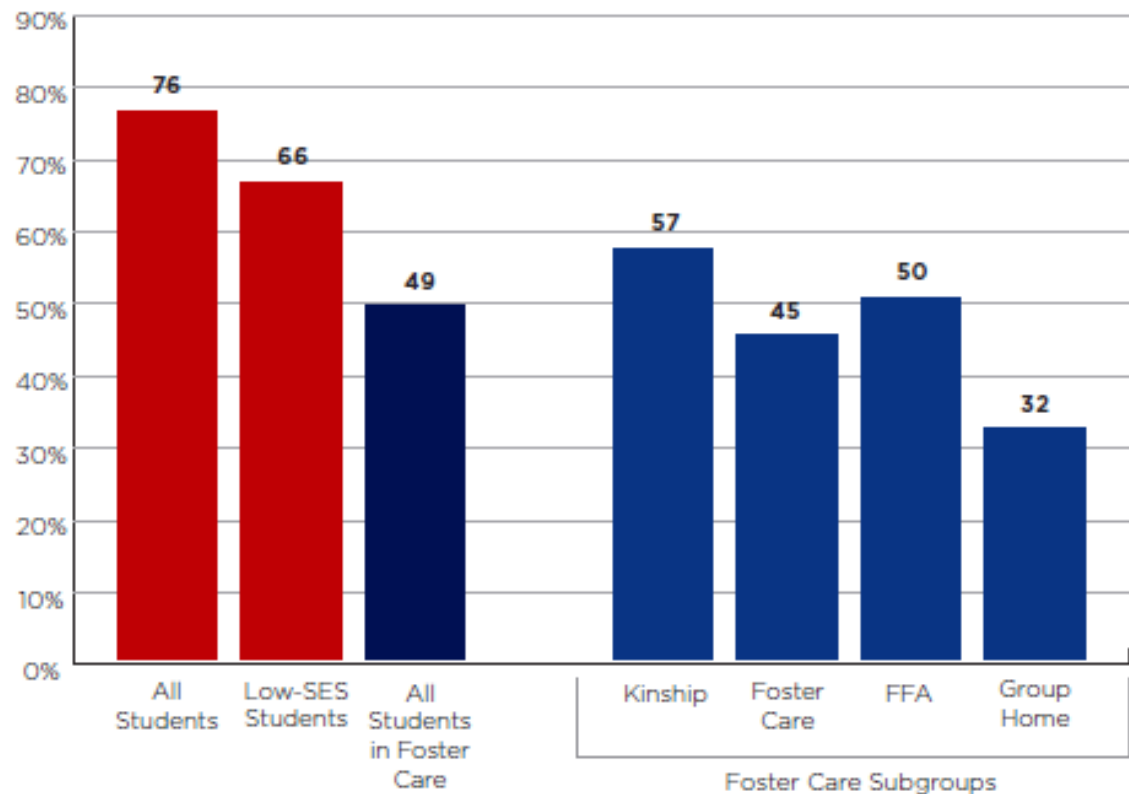
“On the grade 2 through 7 mathematics portion of the California Standards Test...37% of students in foster care achieved proficiency, compared to 50% of low-SES students and 60% among the entire statewide student population.”

FINDING 6

DROP-OUT / GRADUATION

Among all high school students, those in foster care had the highest dropout and lowest graduation rates; students in more stable placements showed better performance for both of these education outcomes.

" Only about half of students in foster care passed California's high school exit exam in grade 10."

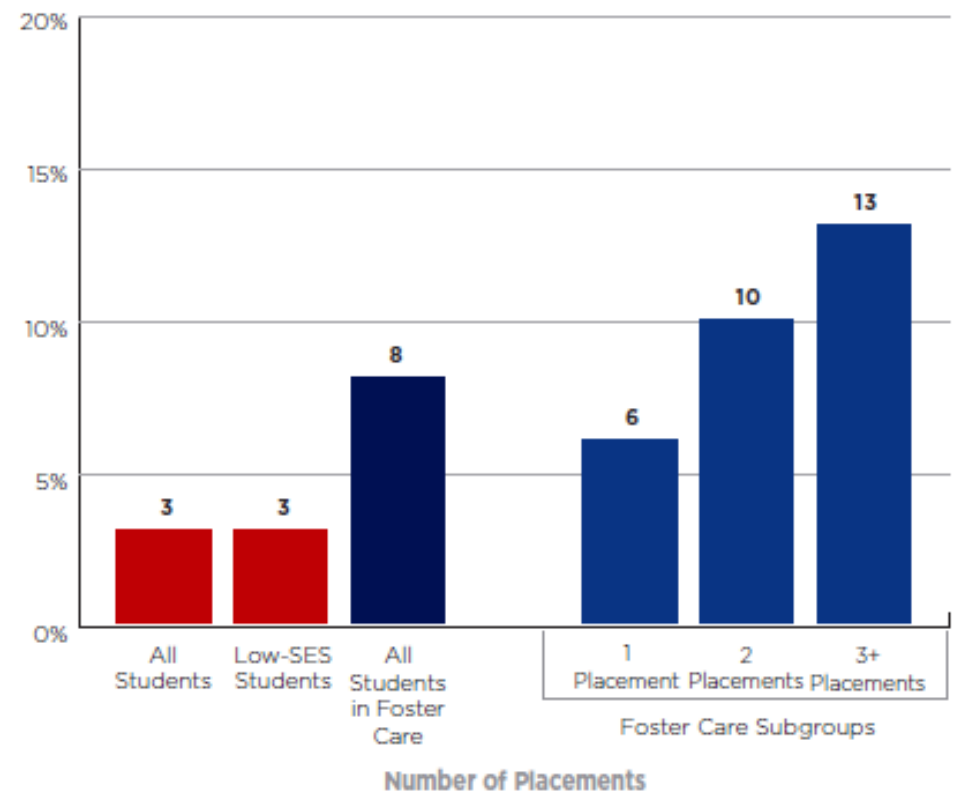


FINDING 6

DROP-OUT / GRADUATION

Among all high school students, those in foster care had the highest dropout and lowest graduation rates; students in more stable placements showed better performance for both of these education outcomes.

*“Students with three or more placements were more than twice as likely to **drop out** as students with one placement, although this single-year dropout rate is still twice as high as for low-SES students and all students in the state.”*



SUMMARY

- Students in foster care constitute an at-risk subgroup that is distinct from low-SES students regardless of the characteristics of their foster care experience.
- Yet, despite relative disadvantage overall, significant variations among students in foster cares still emerged...
- Findings should not be interpreted causally, but still provide information for policymakers and administrators that may help improve the academic success of students in foster care.
- *"Anything that is measured and watched improves."* – Bob Parsons

LESSONS LEARNED FROM MOU PROCESS

- One high level point person in each agency.
- Designate a shepherd in each agency.
- Create a map of the process, including development, review and approval process up front. Update this map as lessons learned are incorporated.
- Development, review and approval of MOU should be structured upfront to survive changes in administration, staffing, leaves, etc.

QUESTIONS?

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INFORMATION?

www.stuartfoundation.org/newsandreports