



## FosterEd Santa Cruz County: Year 2 Evaluation

Prepared for  
National Center for Youth Law

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# Executive Summary

*“I feel that fundamentally the way that foster youth are served as far as academic advocacy in Santa Cruz County has changed since FosterEd has taken effect. Foster Youth Services in Santa Cruz has been fairly reactionary since its infancy. There was just one person, so there was a capacity issue.... It was a mobile reactionary unit. FosterEd has shifted the paradigm. Now, people are getting a little used to the fact that if there’s a foster youth there will be a team there and an Education Liaison. To the Education Liaisons’ credit, they have found problems much sooner than would have popped up on [others’] radar.”*

-County Leadership Team Member

## Background

FosterEd is an initiative of the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) aimed at improving the educational experiences and outcomes of foster youth. It was first developed in Indiana beginning in 2009. With many lessons learned and promising initial findings, California’s Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in Care (IEOCC) workgroup encouraged FosterEd to establish a two-year pilot in a California county.

In 2011, FosterEd approached leaders of the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE), Family and Children’s Services (FCS), and Juvenile Court to gauge their interest in partnering on a pilot project. After a number of exploratory conversations, and with a strong foundation in effective cross-agency collaboration, the County leaders welcomed the opportunity and thus the Santa Cruz County FosterEd partnership began. The program started serving students in the beginning of 2013. In mid-2014, FosterEd Santa Cruz County was invited to formally join the Education Equals Partnership as a demonstration county.

Education Equals is a statewide effort dedicated to improving educational outcomes for students from foster care.

The FosterEd Santa Cruz County model has four core program components:

- Ensuring each youth in care is supported by an *Educational Champion*, with a preference for a biological parent or assumed long-term caregiver
- Ensuring each youth in care is supported by an *education team*, including the Educational Champion and representatives from the child’s school and child welfare agencies
- In partnership with the education team, conducting a *proactive assessment of each student’s educational strengths and needs*
- Developing and monitoring an *education case plan* based on the assessment of the youth’s strengths and needs

The education team approach evolved after the launch of the program, reflecting a recognition that the needs of foster youth require engaging many adults involved in their education, including but not limited to their Educational Champions. With the shift toward teams, FosterEd introduced the use of Goalbook, an online education case management tool that allows the education teams to set goals for youth, track progress, and communicate about the education of the student. All FosterEd cases in Santa Cruz County are managed by one of three Education Liaisons.

## Evaluation Overview

In July 2012, NCYL contracted with RTI International to conduct an external evaluation of the FosterEd Santa Cruz County pilot. The evaluation is expected to go through the third year of implementation. RTI is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to conducting

innovative, multidisciplinary research that improves the human condition.

RTI has approached this study from a Developmental Evaluation Framework, which allows for greater flexibility when analyzing initiatives or innovations, which tend to continuously develop and evolve. Furthermore, Developmental Evaluation is distinct from more traditional evaluative approaches in that the evaluators actively participate in the partnership, and are expected to support on-going program improvement by helping program leaders to put to use data as it emerges from the evaluation.

RTI is employing multiple methods of evaluation, involving the collection and analysis of various types of quantitative and qualitative data. In collaboration with FosterEd staff, RTI developed an evaluation indicators matrix. The evaluation matrix groups indicators into three major sections: infrastructure, practice, and outcomes.

This Year 2 evaluation report covers the first two years of implementation, but with more attention focused on the second year. This is because the first year was detailed in the Year 1 evaluation report and the model evolved between Year 1 and 2 to focus more on education teams, and in so doing relied on different technology tools.

## Progress on Infrastructure Indicators

RTI and FosterEd identified 12 infrastructure indicators reflecting systems, staff, and products that needed to be in place to launch and support the implementation of FosterEd in Santa Cruz County.

By December 2014, the following eight infrastructure components were completed:

- Developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Interagency Agreements within the County
- Developed MOU to draw down Title IV-E funds
- Hired and trained FosterEd staff
- Co-located Education Liaisons at County Office of Education and child welfare offices
- Established joint employment status with NCYL and SCCOE
- Developed Mentoring Modules
- Customized Foster Focus for Santa Cruz County
- Customized Goalbook for FosterEd Santa Cruz County

The following four infrastructure components were ongoing:

- Establishment and persistence of the County Leadership Team
- Engagement with California's Improving Educational Outcomes of Children in Care (IEOCC) Workgroup
- Linking districts in Foster Focus
- Continued integration of FosterEd and the Education Equals Partnership

## Progress on Practice Indicators

RTI is tracking various practice indicators, which list activities of the program that have been identified as critical.

*How many foster youth were served by FosterEd Santa Cruz County?*

- 228 youth served between January 2013 and December 2014
- 95 active cases at the end of December 2014

*Who serves on the education teams?*

- 303 unduplicated team members were serving on at least one team at the end of December 2014
- The largest share were district/school staff or teachers, followed by Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)

*How many Educational Champions have been identified?*

- 162 youth (or 94 percent of active cases) had an Educational Champion by the end of December 2014
- Most Educational Champions were parents, followed by caregivers

*How much communication is happening in Goalbook?*

- High of 794 messages sent in one month (October 2014)
- In most months, more than 25 percent of active cases had no Goalbook messages sent
- Majority of messages are sent by Education Liaisons
- 88 percent of adult team members found Goalbook to be an effective tool

*How many volunteers?*

- 37 have been recruited and trained
- 10 currently assigned to cases as of end of December 2014

## Progress on Outcomes Indicators

RTI is tracking a number of outcomes indicators for the evaluation, including some related to youth and others related to Educational Champions.

### Youth Outcomes

*How many unmet educational needs were identified and addressed?*

- 694 goals were set for foster youth, each of which addressed an identified need
- Of the 499 goals set by active and forming teams, 113 goals had been completed (see **Figure A**)
- Of the 195 goals set by closed and on hold teams, 78 goals had been completed (see **Figure B**)
- Most goals were academic in focus

Figure A: Status of Student Goals, for Active and Forming Teams (Counts)

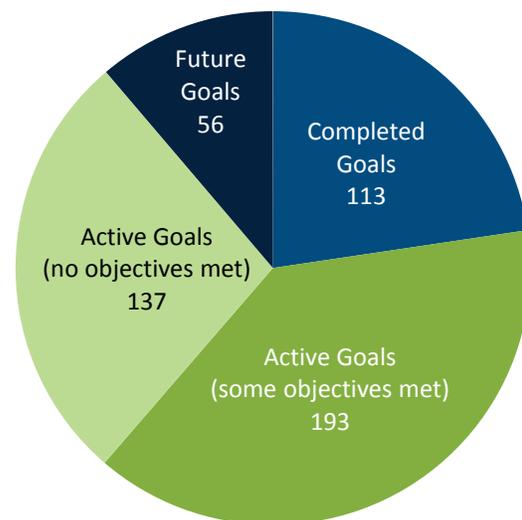
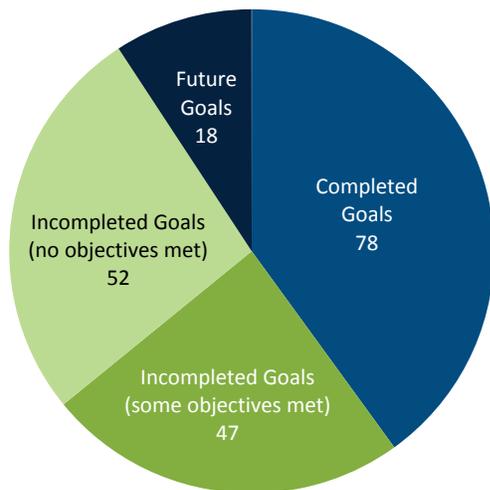


Figure B: Status of Student Goals, for Closed and On Hold Teams (Counts)



*What do adult team members perceive as the impacts of FosterEd on foster youth?*

- At least 75 percent of adult respondents perceived at least “a little” positive impact of FosterEd on a number of dimensions, including attendance and behavior at school, grades, and peer and teacher relationships

*What are youths’ attendance rates prior to and after joining FosterEd?*

- Approximately 75 percent of foster youth who entered FosterEd with less than a 95 percent attendance rate increased their attendance
- Over 90 percent of foster youth who entered FosterEd with at least a 95 percent attendance rate maintained an attendance rate of 90 percent or greater

*What are youths’ grades prior to and after joining Foster Ed?*

- 43 percent of youth joined FosterEd with a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) or below; in the school terms after joining FosterEd, 32 percent earned a 2.0 or below

- 25 percent of youth joined FosterEd with a 3.0 GPA or greater; in the school terms after joining FosterEd, 39 percent earned a 3.0 or greater
- Median GPA increased from 2.04 prior to Foster Ed to 2.80 after joining FosterEd
- Due to a relatively small sample size, these data should be interpreted with caution

### *Educational Champion Outcomes*

*What goals have been identified to increase the capacity of Educational Champions?*

- A total of 96 goals for 22 Educational Champions had been set, with 16 completed
- The largest share of goals for Educational Champions (51) relate to strengthening their capacity to support the youth’s academic experiences

### *Program Outcomes*

*What are adult team members’ perceptions of the FosterEd program?*

- At least 75 percent of team members agreed with various positive statements about FosterEd
- While over half of the parent/caregiver subgroup reported that FosterEd helped them become a stronger educational supporter for their child, a substantial portion of parents/caregivers did not find much benefit to themselves. Other types of team members (social workers and teachers/district/school staff) reported more benefits
- 92 percent of adult team members would recommend FosterEd to other adults in the lives of foster youth

*What suggestions do adult team members have for improving FosterEd?*

- Involve teachers and schools more, including fostering better and more open communication
- Involve parents more and in different ways, and involve youth more
- More in-person meetings and other forms of communication
- Address Education Liaison workload and program resource concerns

*Sustainability*

As of the writing of this report, funding was secured to transfer two of the three Education Liaison roles to County Office of Education positions beginning July 1, 2015. The third Education Liaison is already a County Office of Education employee, using federal Title IV-E funds. The partners will continue to work during 2015 to secure agency funding for the Project Manager position.

*State Outcomes*

RTI is tracking a number of state-level outcomes identified by FosterEd as goals to achieve beyond the Santa Cruz County pilot project, which reflect its state policy efforts. Although it is impossible to quantify or isolate NCYL's contributions to the state outcomes, RTI is comfortable reporting on them as a reflection of FosterEd's efforts given the extent of its involvement in state working groups and other state-level activities, including as members of the Education Equals Partnership.

NCYL did not expect to achieve all of these state outcomes during the Santa Cruz County pilot, but rather by the end of the pilot or in the first few years following the pilot. Nevertheless, all 13 state-level outcomes were either attained by the end of Year 2 of the pilot, or substantial progress was made. Many of these were

achieved through a sweeping education reform called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), signed into law by California's governor in July 2013. Efforts around achieving several of these outcomes, updating and improving the Foster Youth Services statutes and Request For Proposal in particular, are ongoing and part of a collaboration with legislative, agency, and organizational partners.

- Legislation requiring data sharing between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Department of Education (CDE) and between CDE and Local Education Agencies (LEAs)
- Data sharing between CDSS and CDE
- Data sharing between CDE and LEAs related to students in foster care
- Legislation holding schools and school districts accountable for the educational outcomes of foster youth
- Legislation requiring school districts to develop plans detailing how they will improve the educational outcomes of foster youth
- Meaningful guidance and model plans/templates developed and used by the CDE and SBE
- Improved judicial process and forms to identify a foster child's education rights holder developed and used outside of Santa Cruz County
- Standardized MOU for use in using FYS funds to leverage Title IV-E funds developed and used outside of Santa Cruz County
- Improved statutes governing the Foster Youth Services (FYS) program
- Improved FYS Request for Proposal (RFP)

- Use of Goalbook outside of Education Equals counties
- Use of Educational Champion Mentoring Modules outside of Santa Cruz County
- Development of state-wide tools for implementing projects to support foster youth

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The strong forward momentum of FosterEd that began in Year 1 did not wane in Year 2. Major, well thought-out adjustments to the model were introduced and refined, including the transition to education teams. Education outcomes data reveal positive findings regarding attendance and GPA, which were consistent with perceptions of adult team members regarding the impact of FosterEd on youth. The collaboration among agency partners continued to be strong, and important achievements in state policy present unprecedented opportunities for California to better support the education of our youth in foster care.

RTI offers the following recommendations for continuing to strengthen FosterEd in Santa Cruz County during the third year of implementation, including its transition from a pilot project to a sustained publically financed project:

- Strengthen youth engagement
- Continue to monitor and support teaming inside and outside of Goalbook
- Reconsider the value of the volunteer program. If it is important, allocate resources so that the volunteers can be continually supported
- Consider expanding FosterEd to serve Santa Cruz County youth placed out of county, out-of-county youth placed in Santa Cruz County, and probation youth
- Continue supporting districts in developing and implementing strong supports for foster youth via Local Control Accountability Plans and LCFE
- As staff and program management for FosterEd Santa Cruz County transfer from NCYL to county agencies, do not underestimate the need for continuing infrastructure support such as the Leadership Team. Be careful of diluting Education Liaisons' focus on cases with other county responsibilities

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## Background

FosterEd is an initiative of the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) aimed at improving the educational experiences and outcomes of foster youth. It was first developed in Indiana beginning in 2009. With many lessons learned and promising initial findings, California's Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in Care (IEOCC) workgroup encouraged FosterEd to establish a two-year pilot in a California county. The IEOCC is an inter-agency workgroup with representatives from the California Department of Education, Department of Social Services, Administrative Office of the Courts, and County Welfare Directors Association.

In 2011, FosterEd approached leaders of the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE), Family and Children's Services (FCS), and Juvenile Court to gauge their interest in partnering on a pilot project. After a number of exploratory conversations, and with a strong foundation in effective cross-agency collaboration, the County leaders welcomed the opportunity. In May 2012, the partners applied for and received a grant from the Children's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Santa Cruz County pilot has also been supported by generous funding from the Stuart Foundation, USA Funds, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the TK Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Numerous local agencies also provided funding and in-kind contributions.

FosterEd's work in California is part of the Education Equals Partnership, a statewide effort dedicated to improving educational outcomes for students from foster care. The Education Equals Partnership was launched by the Stuart Foundation in 2012, and the National Center for Youth Law has been involved since its inception, providing state policy expertise and advocacy. In recognition of a successful first

year of implementation of FosterEd Santa Cruz County, the county was invited in 2014 to formally join the Education Equals Partnership as a demonstration county. Three other counties—Fresno, Orange, and Sacramento—also participate in the Partnership as demonstration sites.

FosterEd is also engaged in collaborative work to support the education of foster youth in Los Angeles County, San Francisco Unified School District, and Oakland Unified School District. Outside of California, a pilot project was launched in Pima County, Arizona in 2014, and FosterEd is currently developing a pilot with partners in New Mexico.

## About this Report

This report summarizes the accomplishments and lessons learned during the planning phase for the Santa Cruz County pilot and the first two years of implementation (2013 and 2014). A prior report released in April 2014 detailed progress as of the end of the first year of implementation (December 2013). In addition to documenting progress through the second year of implementation, this report presents student-level education outcomes data for the first time.

## The Need

In 2012, there were approximately 400,000 children in foster care in the United States, and approximately 55,000 foster children living in California (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013; Needell et al., 2013). Taken from their families because they have experienced abuse or neglect, foster children are among the most vulnerable of the American population. Research has shown that in addition to experiencing trauma from abuse and from being taken from their families, many foster youth also have poor educational outcomes.

- As many as 75 percent perform below grade level (Kelly, 2000)
- 50–80 percent have been retained at least one year in school
- More than 50 percent do not graduate from high school
- Less than one in five have ever received an “A” in English, math, history, or science
- As many as 69 percent screen positive for a behavioral problem, academic skill delay, or school failure (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)
- A disproportionate number are subjected to punitive school discipline policies and are suspended or expelled from school (Courtney et al., 2004)
- Are more likely than the general population to be enrolled in the lowest performing schools;
- Are twice as likely to be designated with a disability and five times more likely to be classified with an emotional disturbance;
- Are more likely to change schools during the school year; and
- Are less likely to enroll in community college and persist for a second year.

Recent research in California reveals that foster youth constitute a distinct subgroup of academically at-risk students with documented achievement gaps. Compared to other vulnerable student populations such as low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities, foster youth experience more educational challenges and have poorer educational outcomes (Frerer, Davis Sosenko, & Henke, 2013; Barrat & Berliner, 2013). Additionally, foster youth:

- Are consistently among the academically lowest performing subgroups in math and English;
- Have the highest dropout rates and are less likely to graduate from high school;

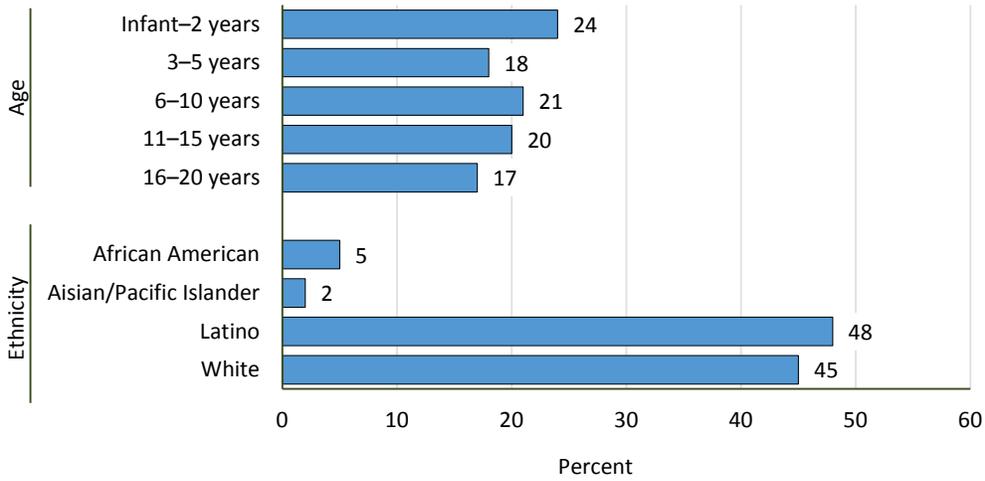
## The Santa Cruz County Context

Approximately 300 Santa Cruz County youth were placed in out-of-home foster care in 2012 (Needell et al., 2013). In addition, there were approximately 150 active child welfare cases in which the child was residing at home (Data provided by Santa Cruz County Human Services Department, January 2012). Almost one-quarter were age two or younger and 18 percent were age 3 to 5, which are typical preschool ages, particularly given that the ages are measured in July (**Figure 1**).

The remaining youth were of an age in which youth are expected to be in K–12 education or early postsecondary education (ages 6 to 20).

The largest ethnic group of youth in foster care in Santa Cruz County is Latino (48 percent), followed by White (45 percent). Small percentages are African American and Asian (5 percent and 2 percent, respectively).

FIGURE 1: Age and Ethnicity of Santa Cruz County Foster Youth, 2012



NOTE: Included in the figure are children under age 21 in foster care on July 1, 2012. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

SOURCE: Needell et al., 2013.

## FosterEd Logic Model

Figure 2 depicts the logic model underlying FosterEd. It includes the following core elements:

- Identifying and supporting Educational Champion(s) for the child
- Developing and monitoring of an education team
- Individualized education plans based on the youth's strengths and needs

In addition to these core elements, note the inclusion of a continuous cycle of data-driven interventions. FosterEd recognizes that educational information about the youth must be readily accessible and shared with members of the youth's team. Gathering educational information is accomplished in one of two ways, both involving Foster Focus, a database managed by the Sacramento County Office of Education. Districts can "link" to Foster Focus, enabling nightly data uploads from their district's student information system.

Alternatively, if districts are not "linked" to Foster Focus, educational information can be gathered from the school through records requests and manually entered into Foster Focus by FosterEd staff.

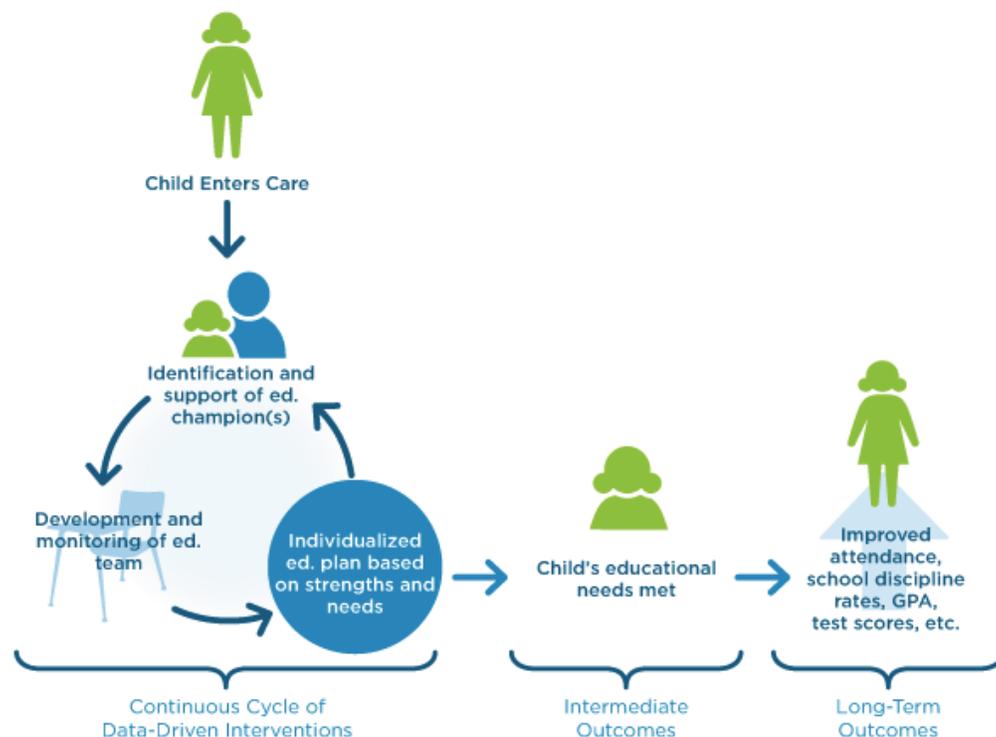
## FosterEd Santa Cruz County Model

The details of the FosterEd model are customized for each county and evolve as each pilot progresses. Below are four programmatic elements for FosterEd Santa Cruz County.

### 1 Ensuring each youth in care is supported by an Educational Champion

Parental involvement in education is one of the strongest predictors of a student's educational success. Foster youth often do not have anyone in their lives championing their education by monitoring their academic progress and advocating for their educational needs. Understandably, agency and caregiver attention is often focused on their safety and well-being,

FIGURE 2: FosterEd Logic Model



and consequently the educational needs of youth are typically not given sufficient time in child welfare team meetings or service plans.

FosterEd aims to raise awareness about the educational needs of foster youth by identifying at least one person who can serve as a champion in this area. Ideally, this would be a biological parent or assumed long-term caregiver, someone likely to be a part of a youth's life long-term and therefore able to continue supporting the child educationally even after he or she leaves foster care.

## **2** Ensuring each youth in care is supported by an education team

While Educational Champions are an important component of the model, FosterEd recognizes that to fully support the educational strengths and needs of youth, a team of adults needs to be engaged, including representatives from the children's school and child welfare agencies. Other adults in the children's lives, such as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), coaches, or an engaged aunt or uncle, may also be team members. The Educational Champion is a member of the education team.

## **3** Conducting a proactive assessment of each student's educational strengths and needs

As youth enter FosterEd, their strengths and needs are assessed. This is done by FosterEd staff in partnership with the Educational Champion and the youth's education team, and includes a review of the youth's Education Cumulative File. When developmentally appropriate, the youth are invited to join their own education team and be involved in reflecting on their own strengths and needs. Strengths and needs across three primary dimensions are examined: academic (e.g., attendances, grades), social capital (e.g., positive relationships with school staff), and

social development (e.g., involvement in extra-curricular activities).

## **4** Developing and monitoring an education case plan based on the assessment of the youth's strengths and needs

Based on the assessment of strengths and needs, the team sets goals for the youth, and collaborates to support the goals and track progress.

## FosterEd Core Practice Components in Santa Cruz County

### *The Critical Role of the Education Liaison*

A number of Education Liaisons essentially staff the FosterEd program. In Santa Cruz County, three Education Liaisons manage the FosterEd cases, and a full-time Project Manager provides oversight and support to the Education Liaisons while also nurturing and supporting partnerships with SCCOE, FCS, Juvenile Court and other collaborators.

The Education Liaisons work with FCS and the Dependency Court Judge to bring cases into FosterEd, then stay with FosterEd cases throughout the duration of the dependency case. Education Liaisons coordinate the assessment of the strengths and needs of the youth, identify Educational Champions, connect with other adults in the youth's life to form an education team, and assist the team in developing and tracking educational goals and objectives.

### *A Shift towards Education Teams*

The roles of the Education Liaison and Educational Champions evolved considerably during the first year of implementation. The

initial vision of FosterEd Santa Cruz was to identify an adult who was expected to be in a youth's life long-term and who would be able to champion the youth's education. FosterEd would focus on providing mentoring to that adult to strengthen his or her capacity to support the youth's education. Whenever possible, FosterEd planned to work with the biological parent as the Educational Champion.

After the launch of the program in January 2013, the Education Liaisons soon discovered that, as they took on cases, they were identifying many urgent unmet educational needs of youth, such as out-of-date Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, students on the verge of expulsion, and students lacking critical school supplies. While still recognizing the value of mentoring the Educational Champion to be able to effectively intervene to help address these unmet needs, the Education Liaisons found that in many cases, the process of mentoring the Educational Champions was not producing outcomes fast enough to address the immediate needs of the youth, and FosterEd felt they could not just stand by and witness the needs persist without intervention. The Education Liaisons found themselves simultaneously dealing with the urgent educational needs of the youth while also doing the important but very time-consuming work of mentoring the Educational Champion.

After much discussion and consideration, FosterEd and the Leadership Team decided to shift the model to incorporate a team approach which is now reflected in the core programmatic elements presented on pages 4 and 5. The goal in implementing this approach was to build a network of adult support around each student to address his or her educational needs and to improve collaboration among these adults. This shift reflected a recognition that the often multiple, immediate educational

needs of foster youth require engaging many of the adults involved in their education, including but not limited to their Educational Champions. It also reflected the reality that the county's small Foster Youth Services team does not have the capacity to meet all of the unmet needs of foster children identified through the assessment process, necessitating a team-based approach that engages other professionals involved in the children's lives. Note that while FosterEd has shifted to primarily support students through education teams, the program continues to identify Educational Champions for foster youth and offers support to these Educational Champions to increase their capacity. Please see pages 22 and 36 for more information about these components.

### *Use of Goalbook*

As the role of the Education Liaisons shifted to forming and then supporting education teams for foster youth, the need for an effective collaboration tool became apparent. FosterEd contracted with Enome, Inc., a company that developed Goalbook, an online educational case management tool originally designed to support teams of adults working with special education students. Goalbook enables the education teams to set goals for the youth, track progress on those goals, and generally communicate about the education of the student, including celebrating successes. Education Liaisons create a Goalbook team for each FosterEd student and invite key stakeholders (such as the youth's Educational Champion, social worker, teacher, CASA, and caregiver) to join the student's education team in Goalbook. The student is invited, if appropriate, to participate in the team if or when he or she is at least 14 years old. Based on an assessment of the youth's educational strengths and needs, the team identifies goals for the youth to list within Goalbook and tracks progress on those goals by updating Goalbook.

# Evaluation Overview

In July 2012, NCYL contracted with RTI International<sup>1</sup> to conduct an external evaluation of the Santa Cruz County FosterEd pilot. The evaluation is expected to go through May 2016. RTI is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to conducting innovative, multidisciplinary research that improves the human condition. With a worldwide staff of more than 3,700, RTI is active in education, child welfare, health and medicine, environmental protection, and decision support systems. RTI maintains its company headquarters in North Carolina, eight regional offices in the United States, 10 international offices, and many project-specific offices around the world. This project is conducted out of the Berkeley, California office with Dr. Jennifer Laird leading the evaluation.

RTI aims to conduct evaluations that are methodologically sound, transparent, and meaningful. The goal is to both capture the impacts of programs and systems changes, and inform their ongoing development. RTI has approached this study from a Developmental Evaluation framework, which allows for greater flexibility when analyzing initiatives or innovations, which tend to continuously develop and evolve. When a great deal is in flux, it is impossible to establish a static logic model that reflects precisely what is to happen as implementation advances. Alternatively, linear logical approaches work well when the problem is well understood and the solution is clearly defined.

By using a Developmental Evaluation framework, the study is able to adjust as the

program evolves. Furthermore, Developmental Evaluation is distinct from more traditional evaluative approaches in that the evaluators actively participate in the partnership, and are expected to support ongoing program improvement by helping program leaders use data as it emerges from the evaluation in order to advance the program.

## Evaluation Indicators Matrix

In collaboration with FosterEd staff, RTI developed an evaluation indicators matrix (see Appendix A). RTI considers it a “roadmap” for the evaluation, acknowledging that it must be revisited periodically to ensure that it remains consistent with evolving FosterEd practices. The matrix presents information on what will be measured in the evaluation (i.e., the indicators), what the data source will be for each indicator, how frequently it will be measured, and when it is reasonable to expect to see change on the indicator. To the extent possible, RTI is leveraging data and instruments that are used as part of the practice, as opposed to being used solely for the evaluation. This is to limit the burden of additional data collection on the program.

The evaluation matrix groups indicators into three major sections: infrastructure, practice, and outcomes. The infrastructure indicators include products, systems, staff, and resources that need to be in place to support the FosterEd practice (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding for data sharing). Practice indicators list activities of the program that RTI and FosterEd consider critical and therefore should be counted, tracked, and reported. Outcomes indicators are what FosterEd is trying to affect, and includes youth outcomes (e.g., improved attendance) and Educational Champion

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<sup>1</sup> The initial contract was with MPR Associates. In May 2013, MPR was acquired by RTI International.

outcomes (e.g., increased capacity to support the youth's education).

Although this evaluation is focused on the Santa Cruz County pilot, the pilot is part of a broader NCYL effort in California, including through its membership in the Educational Equals Partnership, to support the education of foster youth across the state. FosterEd in California operates at both the local and state level, with local programmatic challenges and successes informing state policy efforts, and improvements to state policy facilitating improved local implementation. FosterEd's state policy efforts include legislative advocacy and collaborative projects with state child welfare, education, and judicial agencies. The matrix includes some state-level outcomes as well.

After drafting the evaluation matrix with FosterEd staff, RTI presented it to the County Leadership Team and incorporated their feedback. RTI believes that this level of transparency and collaboration with the partners involved in FosterEd is critical to conducting a comprehensive and useful evaluation.

## Evaluation Methods

RTI is employing multiple methods for the evaluation. **Table 1** on the next page lists the methods used thus far. Moving forward into the third year of implementation and evaluation, RTI expects to continue using these evaluation methods as well as incorporating additional methods as needed. Most importantly, longitudinal educational data for the youth will continue to be extracted from Foster Focus and analyzed.

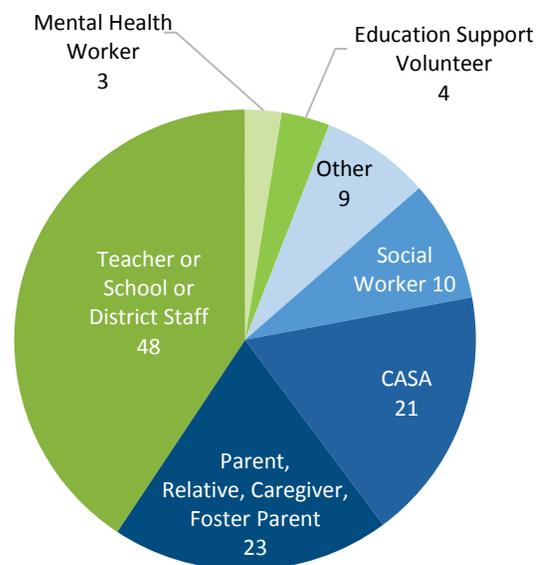
As noted in Table 1 on the next page, adults serving on students' education teams were surveyed in October 2014. **Figure 3** reports the number of adult survey respondents. The

largest group was teachers or school/district staff (48) followed by parents, relatives, caregivers or foster parents (23) and CASAs (21).

This Year 2 evaluation report covers the first two years of implementation, but with more attention focused on the second year. This is because the first year was detailed in the Year 1 evaluation report and the model evolved between Year 1 and 2 to focus more on education teams, and in so doing relied on different technology tools. For example, in Year 1, education plans were developed and stored in Foster Focus. In Year 2, plans were developed and stored in Goalbook, which enabled more adults to be able to collaborate virtually.

The evaluation findings are grouped by progress made on infrastructure, practice, and outcomes indicators. Qualitative data are woven throughout the presentation of quantitative data. A final section presents conclusions and recommendations from the evaluators.

**FIGURE 3: Role Type of Adult Team Member Survey Respondents**



SOURCE: Adult Team Member Survey, October 2014.

TABLE 1: FosterEd Santa Cruz County Evaluation Methods

Qualitative Data Collection Methods	Notes
Bi-Weekly Calls with FosterEd Staff	RTI holds bi-weekly calls with a focus on coordinating the logistics of the evaluation (e. g. plan for data collection), and discussing challenges and unexpected opportunities that are arising within the program, with the goal of supporting continuous program improvement.
Observations of County Leadership Team	The Leadership Team met monthly or bi-monthly leading up to and during the first year of implementation. During the second year of implementation, the team met quarterly. RTI participates in most of the meetings of the County Leadership Team, providing periodic evaluation updates and observing the dynamics of the group and the issues discussed.
Interviews with Members of the County Leadership Team	In Year 1, RTI interviewed 9 of the 10 members of the County Leadership Team in December 2013 and January 2014. One team member was not interviewed because she was a recent replacement for a former member. In Year 2, RTI interviewed 7 of the 10 members of the County Leadership Team in February 2015. For the interviews, RTI selected new members and members who represented key partnerships for FosterEd.
Focus Group with Education Liaisons	RTI conducted a focus group with the Education Liaisons in September 2014, and a subsequent focus group in February 2015.
Quantitative Data Collection Methods	Notes
Administrative Data (e.g., number of cases, number and relation of Educational Champions)	During the second year of implementation, FosterEd tracked case administrative data in Goalbook. The data were extracted, de-identified, and transferred to RTI. This Year 2 report focuses on these data. In Year 1, administrative data were tracked in an Excel Workbook, and the Year 1 Evaluation report summarized those data.
Case Planning Data	In Year 2, case plan data were tracked and stored in Goalbook. Those data were extracted, de-identified, and transferred to RTI. In Year 1, case plan data were kept in Foster Focus and RTI worked with the Sacramento County Office of Education, which manages the Foster Focus data system, to extract the data for analysis. This Year 2 Evaluation Report focuses on presenting the case plan data extracted from Goalbook for Implementation Year 2.
Communications Data	Data on the number of communications in Goalbook were extracted, de-identified, and transferred to RTI. This includes updated statuses of goals, celebratory messages, and emails from Goalbook to all team members or selected team members. The actual content of the communications were not shared with RTI.
Survey of Adult Team Members	In Year 2, in collaboration with FosterEd, RTI developed a survey for adult team members to solicit their feedback on the FosterEd program. Those who had an activated Goalbook account and served on a team for at least two months were surveyed (N=220). The survey was administered using Survey Gizmo during October 2014. Respondents were sent four email requests to complete the survey and told they would be entered into a raffle for a \$100 gift card if they completed the survey. Of all invited to participate, 118 (or 54 percent of eligible adult team members) completed the survey.
Survey of Educational Champions	In Year 1, in collaboration with FosterEd, RTI developed a survey for Educational Champions to gather their experience with and feedback on FosterEd. The results of that survey were detailed in the Year 1 Evaluation Report.
Volunteer Data	One of the Education Liaisons leads the recruitment and training of volunteers and keeps records of those efforts. Summaries of these records were provided to RTI.

## Progress on Infrastructure Indicators

RTI and FosterEd identified 12 infrastructure indicators reflecting systems, staff, and products that needed to be in place to launch and support the implementation of FosterEd in Santa Cruz County. By December 2014, eight of the infrastructure elements were completed and four were ongoing. This section briefly summarizes the progress made on these indicators. While all of the progress should be considered achievements, this report calls out extraordinary achievements within some of the indicators (labeled as “particularly notable achievements”), as well as areas still in need of attention. The information presented in this section is based on evaluator observations, information supplied by FosterEd staff, interviews with the County Leadership Team, and the focus groups with Education Liaisons.

### Completed Infrastructure

The following eight infrastructure indicators were completed by December 2014, with many having been accomplished before the launch of FosterEd in January 2013.



#### Developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Interagency Agreements within the County

A number of necessary agreements were developed and signed prior to the launch of FosterEd Santa Cruz County. Others were signed during Years 1 and 2 of implementation:

- An Interagency agreement signed by the County Office of Education, Human Services Department and school districts, to share child welfare and education data through Foster Focus
- Two addenda to the above noted interagency agreement to share de-identified data with RTI for evaluation (one signed by districts and the other by the Human Services Department)
- An MOU between the County Office of Education and RTI to share de-identified data for evaluation
- An MOU signed by the districts, NCYL, County Office of Education, Family and Children Services, and the Juvenile Court regarding an educational teaming approach to support foster youth educational success (signed in fall 2013). A renewal memo was signed by the same partners in May 2014 as the original MOU was set to expire on July 1, 2014



#### Developed MOU to draw down Title IV-E Funds

NCYL worked with Family and Children’s Services and the County Office of Education to apply for drawdown of federal Title IV-E funds, through the California Department of Social Services. The purpose of this drawdown was to create and support one of three Education Liaison positions.



#### Hired and trained FosterEd staff

Leading up to the launch of FosterEd Santa Cruz County, three Education Liaisons were hired and trained. These Education Liaisons were supervised by the Project Manager for FosterEd Santa Cruz County who started in that position in November 2011. Mid-way through the first year of implementation and as FosterEd was launching a new pilot in Pima County, Arizona, a Data Manager was hired to support both pilot projects. When one Education Liaison went on maternity leave, a fourth Education Liaison was hired. This person had worked previously with

NCYL in another capacity. In anticipation of the FosterEd work continuing to expand to other counties, and expanding activities at the state level, a plan was developed to transition the original FosterEd Santa Cruz County Project Manager into the Chief Operating Officer position of the overall FosterEd initiative. The fourth Education Liaison who was hired joined the team with the understanding that when the Education Liaison on maternity leave returned from leave, he would transition into the Project Manager role.

During most of 2013 there were four full-time staff dedicated to the FosterEd Santa Cruz County pilot (three Education Liaisons and a Project Manager) and two additional staff supporting part-time (the Data Manager and the Founder and national Director of FosterEd). In 2014, one of the original Education Liaisons left the project, and a new Education Liaison was hired to replace her. The original Data Manager also left in 2014 and a Technology Project Manager was hired to support both the Santa Cruz County and Pima County pilots.



### **Particularly notable achievements related to hiring and training FosterEd staff**

As was detailed in the Year 1 Evaluation Report, the selection and ongoing professional development of the FosterEd staff has been a clear strength of the program, and has enabled many of the other accomplishments. County Leadership Team members have expressed much confidence and appreciation for the FosterEd staff in interviews with the evaluator and during County Leadership Team meetings. A few noted that they participated in hiring the Education Liaisons and felt their inclusion in the hiring process contributed to the selection of a strong Education Liaison staff.

The ability of the FosterEd staff to effectively partner with staff from the child welfare agency and community-based organizations was noted by members of the County Leadership Team as being remarkable. Below are some illustrative comments:

*“When social workers make comments, they very much appreciate the work that the Liaisons do – the social workers see them as a tremendous resource for the child, caregiver, and parent, and a real ally in terms of parental engagement and services and also the well-being of the children who are under our control.”*

*“We team with the Liaisons very well. I can tell you over and over again how thankful [my staff] are to have FosterEd Liaison support.”*

*“The communication with the Liaisons has been seamless. If anything comes up they email us and we get right back to them.”*

The ability of the Liaisons to effectively collaborate with agency partners can be attributed to both the selection of highly qualified people to be Liaisons, as well as their initial training and ongoing professional development. The initial formal training for Education Liaisons consisted of a one-week set of sessions, including a number led by partner agencies. During the Year 1 focus group, Education Liaisons noted the value in meeting with the partner agencies during their initial training in order to understand the basic operations of those agencies and discuss how they were going to collaborate. During the Year 2 focus group, the Education Liaisons noted the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities, such as participation in the Education Equals convening in November, and FosterEd retreats with Education Liaisons from the Pima County, Arizona pilot project.



### Co-located Education Liaisons at County Office of Education and Child Welfare Offices

To facilitate collaboration with staff from the County Office of Education and Family and Children's Services, the Education Liaisons are co-located within those agencies. One Education Liaison is located at the County Office of Education and the other two are located at two separate child welfare offices, one in South County and the other in North County. This co-location was cited by a few County Leadership Team members and the Education Liaisons as an important factor in rooting FosterEd in the county. One Education Liaison explained during Year 1, *"My location has been excellent because a lot of the social workers are here, and I'm in the cubicle in the middle of the room and they have to pass me to use the restroom! I have a lot of casual conversations and it's good for the project."*



### Established joint employment status with NCYL and SCCOE

Two Education Liaisons have joint employment status, as do the Project Manager and Technology Project Manager, with NCYL and SCCOE. The third Liaison is an employee of SCCOE only, not of NCYL, as her position is funded by federal IV-E funds (discussed above). This joint employment status enables Education Liaisons to better support cases because as COE staff they have access to students' educational information.



### Developed Mentoring Modules

FosterEd developed 12 mentoring modules to help adults become effective Educational Champions for their youth. Each module contains a guide, supporting materials, and tip sheets. Two versions of the modules were developed: California standardized and Santa Cruz County specific. Example topics of the

modules are: Communication with Child and School, Monitoring and Facilitating Learning, and Obtaining Academic Support.

All versions are available online for free download. For Santa Cruz County versions, see <http://www.foster-ed.org/resourcesscc.html>



### Customized Foster Focus for Santa Cruz County

Foster Focus is a database developed and managed by the Sacramento County Office of Education. It has a standard set of components that counties can access through licensing agreements. FosterEd uses many of those standard components but also needed additional features to support the program. In preparation of the launch of FosterEd and throughout Year 1 of implementation, FosterEd staff worked with Sacramento County Office of Education to add survey and case plan components as well as the ability to create adult records (for Educational Champions) that are linked to child records. Additionally, the partners worked to modify the script for the nightly uploads from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to Foster Focus to include all dependency cases (Family Maintenance cases were not previously included in Foster Focus).



### Customized Goalbook for FosterEd Santa Cruz County

As the FosterEd model evolved to place a greater emphasis on the role of a team of adults in supporting a foster youth's education, the need for a tool to support such collaboration became apparent. In approximately the middle of the first year of implementation, FosterEd started working with Goalbook to create an education case planning tool for foster youth. By the end of December 2013, the standard features of this modified Goalbook tool for FosterEd were complete and Education Liaisons

started setting up education teams for FosterEd in the application. Through 2014, FosterEd continued to work with Goalbook to add new features and functionalities, such as a dashboard for FosterEd staff to more easily monitor Goalbook activity and extraction tools to be able to extract data from Goalbook for the evaluation and for program administration.



**Particularly notable achievements related to customizing Goalbook**

A major accomplishment at the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014 was the transfer of education plans from Foster Focus to Goalbook. FosterEd and Goalbook staff worked closely to customize the tool to meet the needs of the FosterEd project. As is described on pages 27 and 28, feedback from adult team members who use Goalbook has been quite positive. The functions developed to extract and de-identify data for the evaluation, including complex communication data, have been much appreciated by the evaluator and notable in their ease and clarity. Customizing a technology tool, rolling it out, and supporting staff and other users in understanding how to use the tool is no small feat. The fact that this was done in a relatively short period of time, without an interruption in support to youth, and that adjustments were made throughout the year to continually improve the tool, is noteworthy. Both FosterEd and Goalbook staff should be commended for their collaboration on this technology project.

**Ongoing Infrastructure**

Progress on four of the 12 infrastructure indicators is ongoing, with activity beyond the first and second year of implementation continuing as expected. However, progress on one of these indicators, linking with Foster Focus, continues at a much slower pace than anticipated.



**Establishment and persistence of the County Leadership Team**

The County Leadership Team for the Santa Cruz County FosterEd pilot is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the pilot. The team began with 10 members, representing county agencies and community groups (see **Table 2**). An eleventh member joined in November 2013, representing the Santa Cruz County Children’s Mental Health agency. Each of the members is the leader of their agency or has been appointed by the leader to represent the agency on the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team was established in October 2011 and typically met monthly or bi-monthly for two hours leading up to the launch of the project and during the first year of implementation. During the second year of implementation, the team met quarterly. The FosterEd Project Manager facilitates the County Leadership Team meetings, and all three Education Liaisons participate. RTI also attended most of the meetings.

Table 2: Members of the County Leadership Team

Santa Cruz County	
Agency/Community Organization	Representative
Juvenile Court	Juvenile Dependency Judge
Administrative Office of the Courts	Attorney
Family and Children's Services	Program Manager
Human Services Department	Director of Planning and Evaluation
County Office of Education	Foster Youth Services Coordinator
County Office of Education	Education Liaison (not for FosterEd)
Pajaro Valley Unified School District	AB 490 Liaison
CASA	Executive Director
CASA	Program Manager
Parents Center	Executive Director
Children's Mental Health	Program Supervisor



### Particularly notable achievements related to the County Leadership Team

Having observed the functioning of the County Leadership Team for more than two years, the evaluator is convinced it has been one of the essential ingredients of the success of the FosterEd Santa Cruz County pilot. Through Year 1 and Year 2 interviews and evaluator observations, it is clear that the members have a consistent understanding of the role of the Leadership Team, feel it functions effectively, and feel their contributions are important and valued. Furthermore, members feel the meetings are well-organized and facilitated by FosterEd staff. One member explained, “I think the communication is amazing. I never felt like National Center for Youth Law took control—it’s been very collaborative. We feel that if there are different issues that come up, we have an opportunity to talk about those things.”

At all of the County Leadership Team meetings, program challenges are discussed openly and participants provide useful and specific suggestions for addressing the challenges. The strong commitment of each of the partner agencies and organizations is evident in consistent attendance and high levels of engagement during the meetings. Based on comments shared during the meeting, and the evaluator’s observations of side conversations that occur before and after the meetings, it is clear that the collaboration that occurs during these two-hour now quarterly meetings is only one venue for partner communication. There is also continual communication about individual youth and broader program practices via phone and email, as well as smaller planned and impromptu meetings.



### Engagement with CA’s Improving Educational Outcomes of Children in Care (IEOCC) Workgroup

The FosterEd national Director and California Director update the IEOCC workgroup on FosterEd Santa Cruz County activities at the IEOCC’s quarterly meetings. The workgroup is comprised of representatives from the California Department of Education, the California Department of Social Services, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and the County Welfare Directors Association.

In 2014, the IEOCC adopted three goals that were tied to the work of the Santa Cruz County FosterEd pilot:

- Dissemination of tools to ensure that every child in foster care has an Educational Champion
- Facilitating data sharing between education and child welfare based on the experience of the Santa Cruz County data match process
- Development of an MOU that facilitates the Title IV-E match for the FYS programs based on the Santa Cruz County process

These goals have continued into 2015 as the IEOCC recognizes more refinement will be needed given the changing education landscape as a result of the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (see discussion of Local Control Funding on page 45).



### Linking districts in Foster Focus

In order to effectively support a child’s education, the adults in his or her life need current and accurate information about the child’s educational strengths and challenges. For youth in foster care, a number of new adults enter their lives (e.g., foster parents, social workers, dependency court judges, attorneys,

CASAs, and new teachers if the child changes schools). These new adults certainly need information about the child’s schooling, and even adults already connected to the child, such as biological parents and other relatives, may need support in understanding the educational strengths and needs of the child.

School systems maintain a great deal of educational information on students, including attendance rates, test scores, grade point averages, and behavioral incidents. However, this information is typically not easily accessible to child welfare staff. Foster Focus aims to address this challenge by linking education data supplied by participating districts with CWS/CMS data, thereby giving Education Liaisons, social workers and other authorized child welfare staff access to the educational information of foster youth. With this access, Education Liaisons can help the education teams understand the current

educational circumstances of the youth. The education data stored in Foster Focus also enables RTI to examine whether foster youth improve on important educational indicators, such as attendance and grades, after joining FosterEd.

Leading up to the launch of FosterEd Santa Cruz County and throughout the first year of implementation, the FosterEd Project Manager worked diligently with members of the County Leadership Team, representatives from county school districts, and the Sacramento County Office of Education, to prepare for and implement Foster Focus linkages. The team agreed to concentrate first on linking Pajaro Valley Unified School District, by far the largest district in the county, which educates half of the county’s K–12 public school students. **Table 3** summarizes the progress made through December 2014 in linking the Santa Cruz County districts in Foster Focus.

TABLE 3 : FosterEd Santa Cruz County Linkages as of December 2014

District	Percent of County K–12 Enrollment	Linked Status	Notes
Pajaro Valley Unified	50%	Fully Linked	All of the data expected to be linked were linked. District uses eSchoolPlus.
Santa Cruz City Schools	18%	Mostly Linked	Most of the data expected to be linked were linked. District uses Infinite Campus.
San Lorenzo Valley Unified	11%	FosterEd Plans to Link	District uses PowerSchool.
Scotts Valley Unified	6%	FosterEd Plans to Link	District uses PowerSchool.
Live Oak Elementary	5%	FosterEd Plans to Link	District uses PowerSchool.
Santa Cruz County Office of Ed	3%	FosterEd Plans to Link	District uses PowerSchool.

NOTE: There are five additional districts in Santa Cruz County that FosterEd does not expect to link with Foster Focus. Four of these each educate less than 1% of the K–12 students in the county (Bonny Doon Elementary, Happy Valley Elementary, Mountain Elementary, and Pacific Elementary). The fifth, Soquel Union, educates 5% of the K–12 students in the county.



### Areas in need of attention related to Foster Focus linkage

Foster Focus linkages are not progressing as hoped. This is not a situation unique to FosterEd Santa Cruz County. Linkages are proceeding more slowly than is ideal in Pima County, Arizona, and in at least one other Education Equals demonstration county.

Recognizing the relatively slow pace of linking, FosterEd hired a Data Manager in 2013 to help support this process, in both Santa Cruz and Pima Counties. That position was replaced in October 2014 with a FosterEd Technology Project Manager. FosterEd also provided funds to districts to hire consultants with deep familiarity with their SIS systems to assist in the linking process.

FosterEd and its partners have made good, strategic decisions with regard to prioritizing the order in which they attempt to link districts with Foster Focus, including starting with the two largest districts and then planning to work with a set of districts that use a common Student Information Systems (SIS) vendor.

Despite these adjustments, linking districts with Foster Focus has been more difficult and time-consuming than expected. The sources of the challenges are many. Among them is the variety of SIS systems used across the county, differences in the content and format of district data (even among those using the same type of SIS system), and difficulty in securing adequate time from consultants for the school SIS vendors. RTI has observed the many efforts FosterEd and their partners, including SCOE, have dedicated to this process, and recognize that there is no easy solution.



### Continue integrating FosterEd and the Education Equals Partnership

As described in the Background section of this report, planning for FosterEd Santa Cruz County began in 2011, and the program started serving students at the beginning of 2013. In 2012, the Stuart Foundation launched the Education Equals Partnership, a five-year \$10 million investment, with a goal to ensure that all students from foster care achieve in school at levels equal to or better than their peers and graduate with a wide range of possibilities for their future. Three counties—Fresno, Orange, and Sacramento—joined at the beginning of the Partnership. These same counties had been involved in a prior Stuart Foundation initiative called Ready to Succeed in which the counties tested new and innovative practices designed to improve education outcomes for foster youth. The National Center for Youth Law was invited to join the Education Equals Partnership early in its formation, providing state-level policy expertise and advocacy. In recognition of the strong first year of implementation of FosterEd Santa Cruz County, and because the core programmatic elements of FosterEd are exceptionally well-aligned with the core elements of Education Equals, Santa Cruz County was invited in 2014 to formally join the Education Equals Partnership as a demonstration county.



**Particularly notable achievements related to continuing integration of FosterEd and the Education Equals Partnership**

RTI has been evaluating both FosterEd Santa Cruz County as well as the Education Equals Partnership and was very pleased to learn that the Partnership was expanding to include Santa Cruz County, as it has been evident for quite some time that the vision, goals, and core elements of FosterEd and Education Equals are closely aligned. As a demonstration county, FosterEd staff and their partners join a Community of Practice that includes Cross-County Learning Sessions, providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. Topics have included early childhood education, engaging caregivers, and developing and monitoring education plans.

Based on the evaluator's observations, and comments by other Education Equals partners, it is clear that the FosterEd Santa Cruz County program has joined the Partnership as an active and valued collaborator. A leader from the Stuart Foundation explained: "the addition of Santa Cruz County as a demonstration site provides a learning lab for the Partnership to test the approach in a setting that varies on three dimensions." She then noted these dimensions as being, 1) Santa Cruz County is a small county relative to the three other demonstration counties, 2) the FosterEd program currently reaches all K-12 foster youth, which is the vision of the Partnership and not yet occurring in the other counties, and 3) the program has a different governance model compared to the other counties.

FosterEd Santa Cruz County pilot has been led by a community-based, non-profit organization, in strong partnership with public agencies that serve on the County Leadership Team. A public agency is the lead in the other Education Equals demonstrations counties. It will be important

to track in the coming year the process of transitioning the FosterEd program into a publicly-funded program housed in a public agency (see page 44 for a description of the sustainability effort).

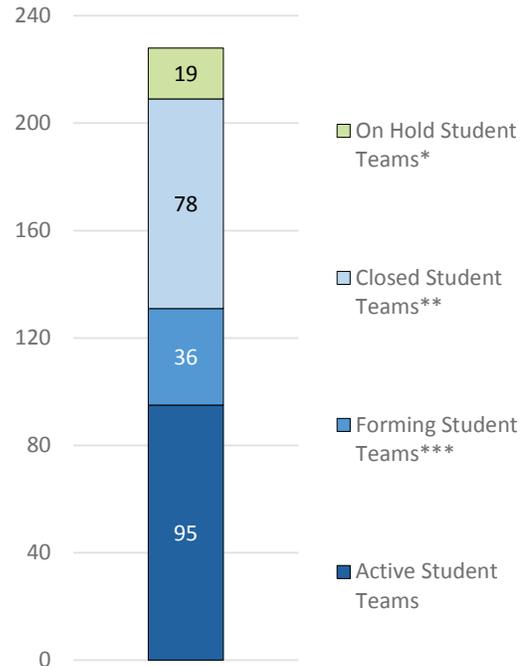
## Progress on Practice Indicators

In designing the evaluation, RTI and FosterEd identified a set of FosterEd practice indicators to track (see Appendix A). These include the number of youth and Educational Champions involved in the program, the frequency of Goalbook use, and the number of volunteers trained. The data presented in this section come primarily from administrative and case management data stored in Goalbook and extracted and de-identified for RTI.

### How many youth have been served by FosterEd Santa Cruz County?

Between January 2013, when FosterEd was launched, and December 2014, **228 foster youth have been served**, with 95 of the cases active at the end of December 2014 and 78 closed (**Figure 4**). FosterEd cases close when the youth leaves dependency (e.g., is reunified with a parent and the child welfare case is closed); if the youth is placed outside of the county and that placement is expected to last a long time; and if non-minor dependents decide not to participate in FosterEd. Cases are put on hold when a youth is placed out of county but the placement is expected to be short-term, or if a youth went AWOL (e.g., ran away from a placement and cannot be located by the child welfare agency). Cases were considered to be forming during the period after a case had been referred to FosterEd but before the initial team meeting had been held.

FIGURE 4: Santa Cruz County Student Teams



SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015, and administrative records for cases that were closed by the end of 2013 before cases were transferred to Goalbook (N=45).

\* Youth placed out of county and that placement is expected to be short term; youth is AWOL.

\*\* Dependency case has ended; non-minor dependent has opted out of FosterEd youth is placed out of county and that placement is expected to last a long time.

\*\*\* Student referred, identifying and activating team members.

Unless otherwise noted, subsequent figures in this section are for students who were served in 2014 and for whom consent to share educational records was obtained. Ten students were referred in 2014 but had not yet had a consent form signed at the time the data were extracted for this report, and therefore we cannot report on their demographic or other information. Forty-five students had their FosterEd case closed in 2013 and their education case plan data and demographic information were not transferred to Goalbook.

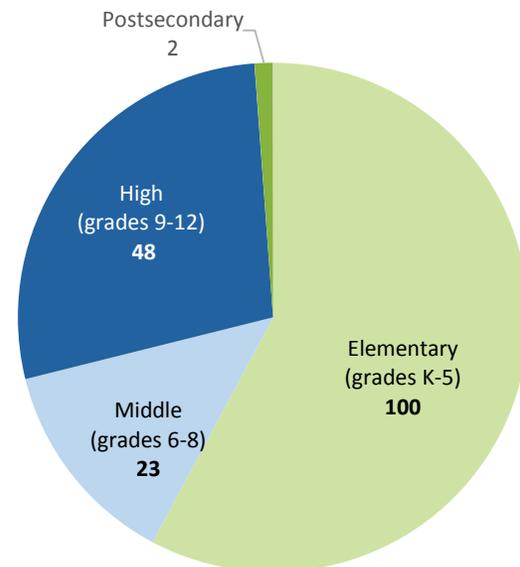
This made reporting on these dimensions difficult given that prior formatting and structure of administrative and education plan data in Foster Focus is not consistent with current data reporting practices. The number of reported student goals that were set and completed in this Year 2 report, for example, is therefore an undercount of the full two years of FosterEd Santa Cruz County implementation. It is more appropriate to view the practice indicators in this section as a reflection of the practices accomplished during 2014. Part of the latter section on outcomes is not limited to FosterEd youth who were active in 2014. Inclusion criteria is noted again in that section.

## Who are the foster youth served?

Most of the FosterEd youth were in elementary grades (**Figure 5**). Slightly more than half were female (**Figure 6**). One-quarter were identified as special education students (e.g., they had an IEP or 504 plan), and an additional 6 percent were suspected by someone on the youth's FosterEd team to

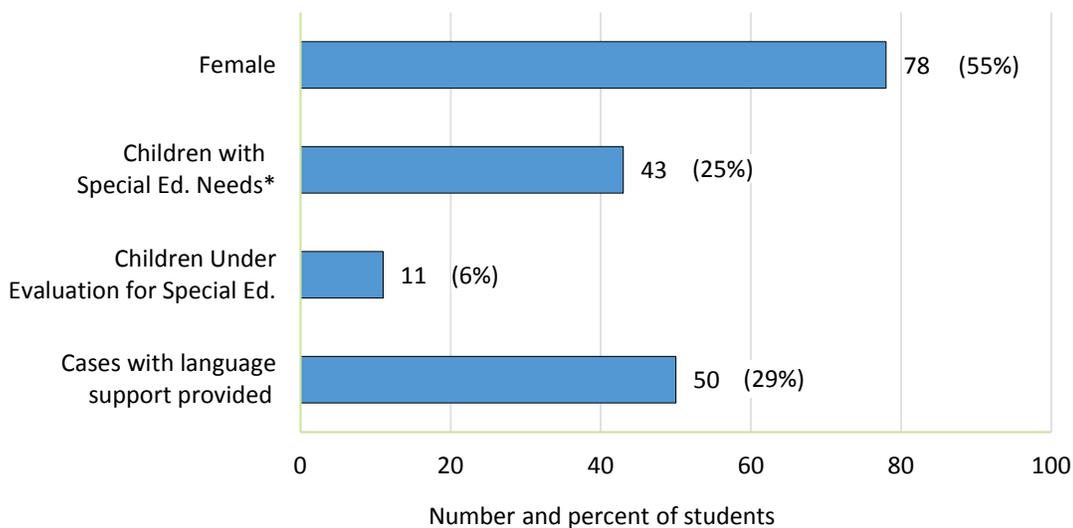
have undiagnosed learning disabilities and were being evaluated for Special Education Services. Twenty-nine percent of students' teams required non-English language support. Typically the need was for Spanish translation for adult relatives, which was provided by the Education Liaison.

**FIGURE 5: School Level for Foster Youth Served**



SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015.

FIGURE 6: Demographic Characteristics of Foster Youth Served



SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015.

\*Child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan.

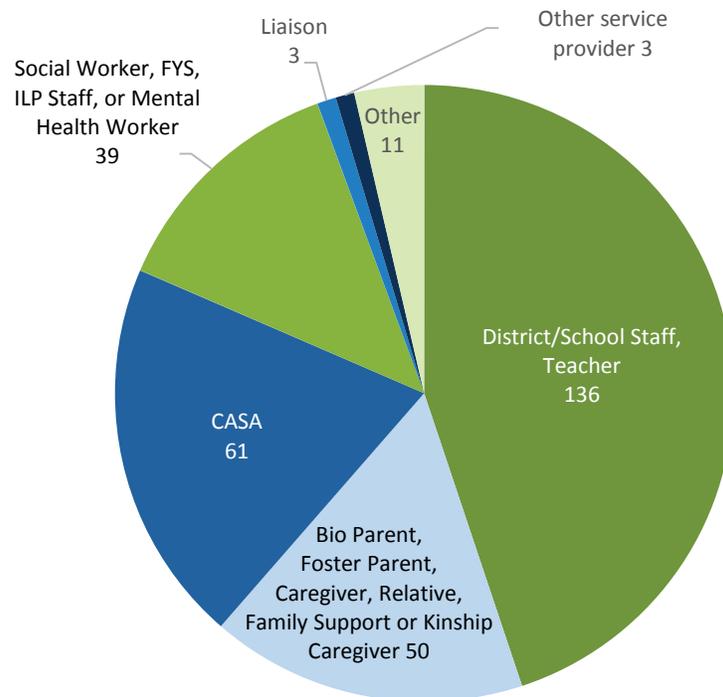
## Who serves on the foster youth's team?

A cornerstone of the FosterEd model is identification and engagement of adults in the foster youth's life to support the youth educationally. Some team members serve on many teams. For example, there are only three Liaisons, but a Liaison is required for each team. The number of duplicative team members, including those who have served on teams that had closed by the end of December 2014, is 910.

**Figure 7** shows the number of unduplicated team members for cases that were active at the end of December 2014 and who activated their Goalbook account. (RTI is working with

FosterEd staff and Goalbook to be able to provide counts for team members who are participating on teams but not through Goalbook.) 303 unduplicated team members were serving on at least one team at the end of December 2014. The non-duplicative counts for all team members, including those who only served on teams that have closed, is 375. The largest share of unduplicated team members were district/school staff or teachers. The second largest share were CASAs.

FIGURE 7: Number of Non-Duplicative Team Members for Open Teams

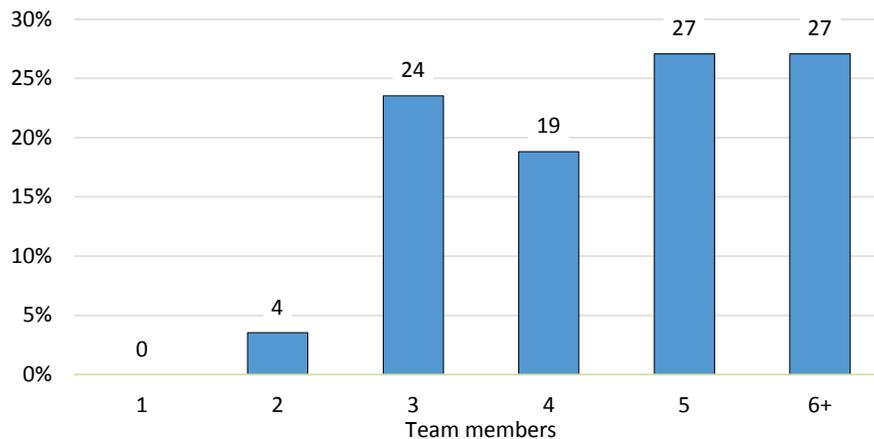


SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015.

**Figure 8** reports the percent of active teams with various numbers of members. About a quarter of active teams had six or more members. **Figure 9** reports the percent of active teams with various types of members. As in Figure 7, the team member had to have activated their Goalbook account to be counted in Figures 8 and 9. Almost all active teams had

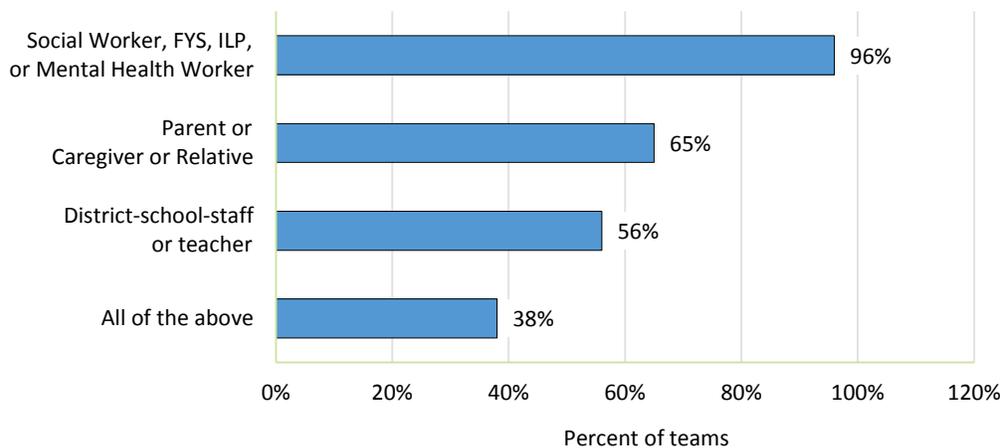
a social worker. 65 percent had a parent, caregiver or relative on the team with an activated Goalbook account, and 56 percent had a representative from the school or district on the team. When each of these four role types were considered in conjunction, 38 percent of students had each of these representatives on their team.

FIGURE 8: Percent of Active Teams with Various Numbers of Members



SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015.

FIGURE 9: Percent of Active Teams with Various Types of Members



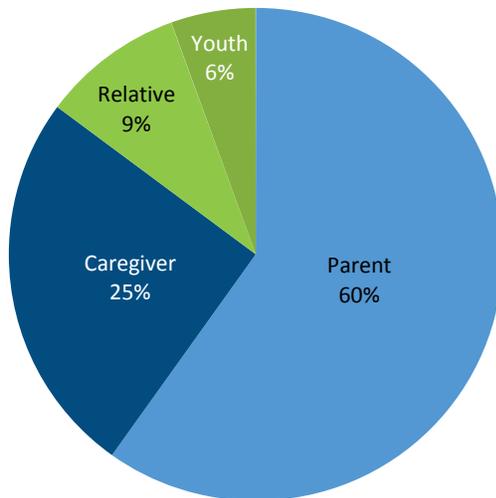
SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015.

## How many Educational Champions have been identified, and who are they?

Among the 173 student teams that were active in 2014 and who had a consent form signed enabling RTI to report on them, 162 (or 94 percent) had an Educational Champion identified by the end of December 2014. **Figure 10** reports the relationship of the Educational Champion to the youth. The largest share is parents, followed by caregivers, and then

relatives. The youth themselves is the Educational Champion for six percent of student teams. In each of these cases, the youth was at least 16 when they were referred to FosterEd.

FIGURE 10: Relationship of the Educational Champion to the Students



SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted January 9, 2015.

## How many FosterEd volunteers have been recruited and trained?

In Year 1, FosterEd developed an extensive set of coordinated activities to recruit volunteers, including:

- Created a profile and advertised the volunteer opportunity and upcoming trainings on volunteermatch.org, scvolunteercenter.com, idealist.org, and craigslist.org
- Presented at local group meetings such as the California Retired Teachers Association, Soroptimist Club, and Lifelong Learners
- Attended volunteer fairs and other events with CASA to conduct outreach

- Attended Rotary Club mixers and passed out flyers
- Circulated a press release about the Educational Support Volunteer program to local papers
- Created and aired 15 and 30 second radio spots on local radio stations
- Circulated volunteer flyers through the public library database
- Submitted information about trainings in the community calendar which is broadcast on a local TV station
- Submitted information about trainings in the community calendar on the COE website
- Posted flyers around the community
- Kept a master email list of people who have reached out to FosterEd to keep them apprised of upcoming volunteer training opportunities

**Table 4** reports information about the number of people who contacted FosterEd to express interest in volunteering, the number who were trained, and the status of those trained. As of the end of December 2014 when data for this evaluation report were collected, 107 individuals had contacted FosterEd Santa Cruz County about volunteering, and about one third had been trained. Only 10 were currently assigned to a case at the end of December 2014.

Table 4: Santa Cruz County Volunteers, through December 2014

Status	Number of Individuals (as of 12/31/13)	Number of Individuals (as of 12/31/14)
Contacted FosterEd to express interest	82	107
Trained	16	37
Currently assigned to a case	8	10
Volunteered on at least one case, but no longer volunteering	0	9
Waiting to be assigned to a case	2	2
Trained but withdrew (did not serve on a case)	6	16

SOURCE: Administrative records kept by FosterEd.

The primary role of the volunteer is to mentor Educational Champions who want support to become more effective educational advocates and monitors of their youth's education. In these instances, an "Educational Champion team" is formed which consists of the Educational Champion, the volunteer, and an Education Liaison. The number of Educational Champion teams that have been formed, and the number of goals set and met for these teams, is presented in the next section.

It is not unusual for the number of inquiries about volunteer opportunities to be much higher than the number who then go on to be trained, as the potential volunteer may realize the opportunity is not a good fit after learning more about it. However, the number of volunteers who were trained but withdrew without serving on a case is high, representing 43 percent of the trained volunteers.

The volunteer program was noted as a significant challenge area during the Year 2 Education Liaison focus group. The Liaisons explained that some volunteers appear to be overwhelmed with being part of a student's education team, active on Goalbook, and also being involved as a mentor for the Educational Champion. As is discussed at the end of this report, RTI recommends FosterEd clarify with

the Leadership Team the importance of the volunteer program, and if it is determined to be important, how to better resource the program so volunteers can be supported and mentored in their roles.

### How much communication is happening in Goalbook?

By program design, the majority of team collaboration is expected to occur via Goalbook. **Figure 11** reports the number of messages sent via Goalbook by month. This includes updating goals, sending messages to all or a select group of team members, and posting celebratory messages. Teams must have at least two members during the month to be included in the analyses. The graph shows a general increase in Goalbook communication, with dips in some months, particularly during July when school was not in session.

Another large dip occurred in November and December 2014. During these months, the FosterEd team was recovering from having one less Education Liaison. One of the original three Education Liaisons left at the end of June and during her absence the Project Manager covered her cases as a hiring search for her replacement was conducted. This was quite difficult given that the Project Manager and

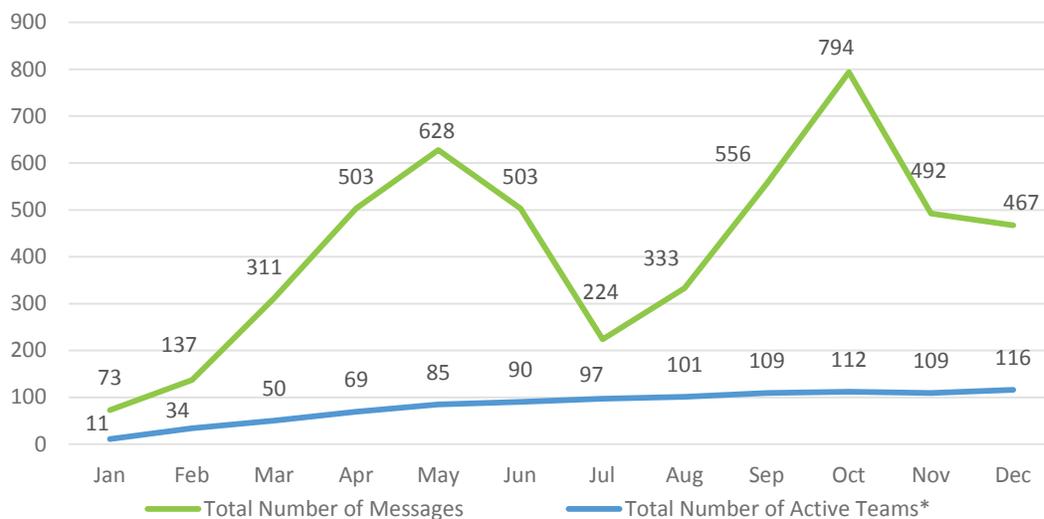
Education Liaison responsibilities are each designed to be full-time positions.

It took longer than anticipated to fill the open Education Liaison posting and the new Liaison was not hired until mid-November. During the end of November and through December, the Project Manager helped to train her. Given the time needed to do this coupled with the November and December holidays, the dip in Goalbook communication statistics is perhaps not surprising. Nevertheless, the team was concerned when they first saw these statistics. RTI has since examined more recent communication data through March 2015 and although it falls outside the time frame covered in this report and therefore is not included in the graph, the FosterEd and County Leadership

teams were reassured to know communication in Goalbook has rebounded. The March communication level was higher than the previous highest month of October 2014.

**Table 5** shows the amount of communication that occurred within teams. In the early months of the project (i.e., January, February and March 2013), about one-quarter of active cases with at least two team members did not have a Goalbook message sent in the month. That portion declined in April, May, and June 2014, but increased in July 2014 and was at or above the 25 percent mark through November. While many teams have a lot of communication within a month, having a sizable portion of cases without any communication in a month is something RTI recommends FosterEd address.

FIGURE 11: Number of Goalbook Messages, by Month



SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted April 21, 2015.

TABLE 5: Percent of teams with varying amounts of Goalbook communication, by month

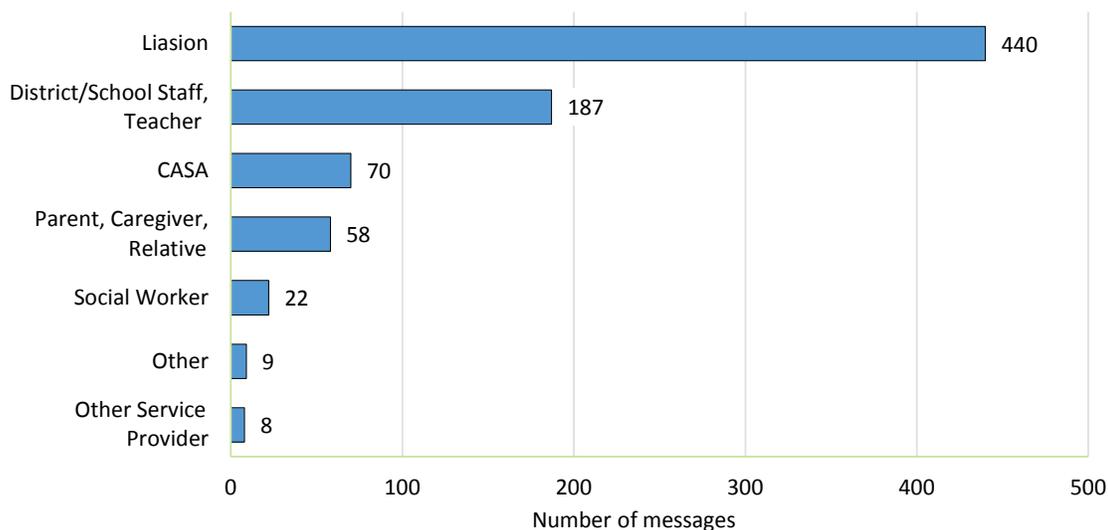
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
0 messages	27%	29%	24%	17%	18%	13%	42%	32%	27%	27%	37%	22%
1 message	18%	29%	14%	13%	21%	12%	20%	15%	10%	9%	11%	18%
2–5 messages	9%	24%	22%	28%	15%	34%	29%	30%	32%	20%	24%	30%
6–10 messages	9%	9%	18%	14%	21%	23%	6%	16%	15%	21%	16%	24%
11+ messages	36%	9%	22%	28%	25%	17%	3%	8%	17%	24%	13%	6%

SOURCE: Goalbook data, extracted April 21, 2015.

To further examine collaboration within Goalbook, **Figure 12** reports how many messages were sent by team member role type in a given month. October 2014 was chosen for this analysis because it had the largest number of messages sent (794), with most of these messages being sent by Education Liaisons (440 messages). In distant second were messages sent by district/school staff or teachers (187 messages).

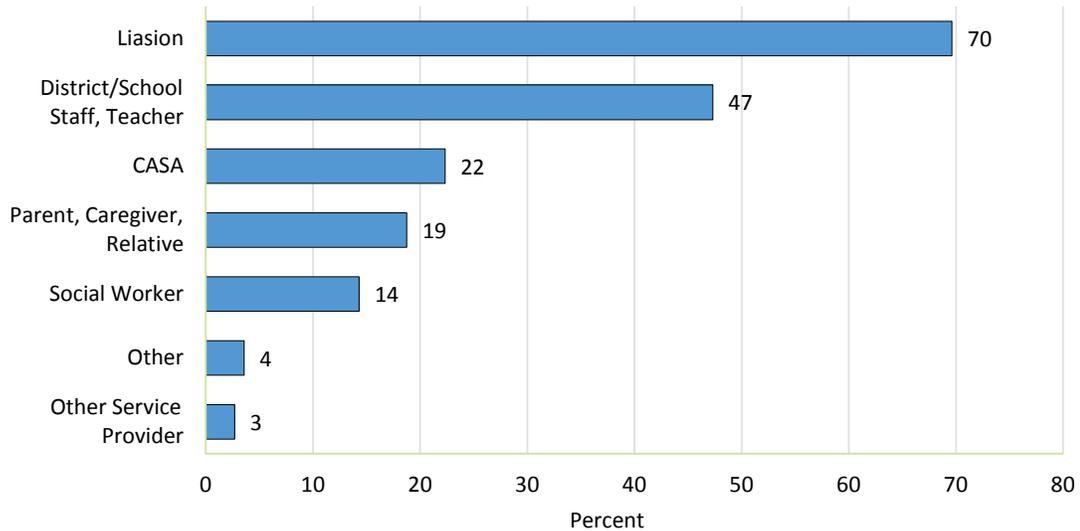
**Figure 13** presents the percent of teams that had a message sent by select role type (among teams that have at least two members and a member of the given role type). Again, Education Liaisons were the most likely to send a message (70 percent of teams had a message sent by an Education Liaison in October 2014), followed by district/school staff or teachers (47 percent) and CASAs (22 percent).

FIGURE 12: Number of Messages Sent by Team Member Role Type, October 2014



SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted April 21, 2015.

FIGURE 13: Percent of teams with a message sent by role type, October 2014



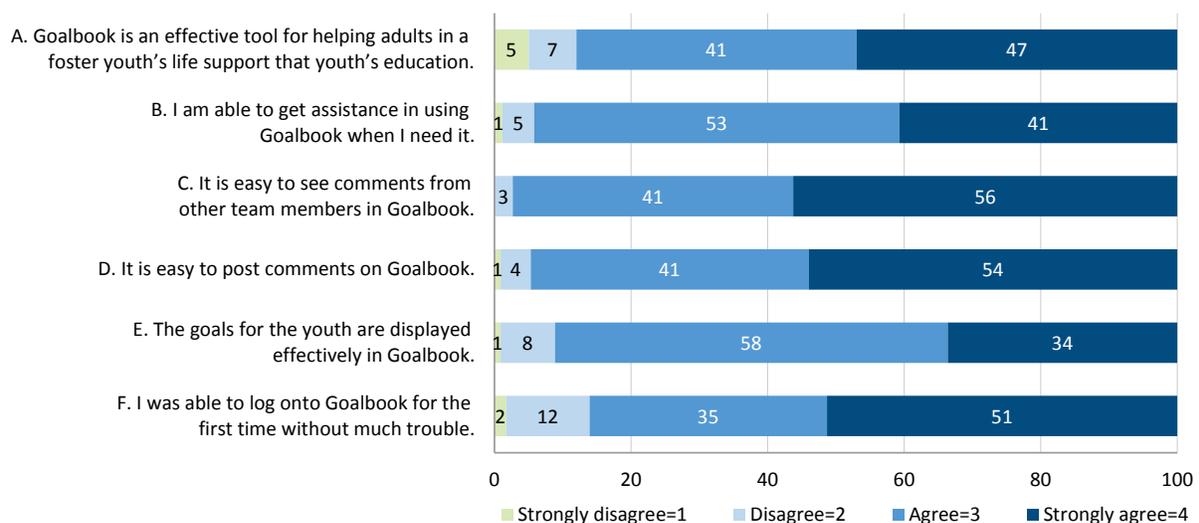
SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted April 21, 2015.

### What are adult team members' perceptions of Goalbook?

The adult team member survey administered in October 2014 asked respondents about their

experiences with Goalbook. A least 85 percent of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to each of the positive statements about Goalbook (**Figure 14**), with 88 percent reporting that it is an effective tool for helping adults in a foster youth’s life support the education of that youth.

FIGURE 14: Adult Team Members’ Perception of Goalbook (Percent)



SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

TABLE 6: Adult Team Members' Perception of Goalbook, by Role Type (Average Response)

	A. Goalbook is an effective tool for helping adults in a foster youth's life support that youth's education.	B. I am able to get assistance in using Goalbook when I need it.	C. It is easy to see comments from other team members in Goalbook.	D. It is easy to post comments on Goalbook.	E. The goals for the youth are displayed effectively in Goalbook.	F. I was able to log onto Goalbook for the first time without much trouble.
CASA	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.6
Social Worker	3.1	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.3
Parent, Relative, Caregiver, Foster Parent	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.4
Teacher or School or District Staff	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.4

SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

When asked to explain their answer to whether Goalbook is an effective tool for helping adults in a foster youth's life support that youth's education, 97 respondents did so. Below is the most common **positive** feedback, with illustrative quotes (87 participants provided positive qualitative feedback):

### 1 Important communication tool

*"There are many cooks in the kitchen and Goalbook enables all of us to communicate to further engage the youth in learning. Goalbook is much more efficient than trying to contact everyone by telephone."*

*"My principal and I would like to use it for a lot of our other students as well. Clear, constant communication between the adults in a child's life is what can make the difference between integral academic and social growth and desperate isolation. I am very happy that this technological element helps us make that positive impact."*

### 2 Provides a central location for information and coordination

*"Information is shared between various people in the foster youth's life, making all informed about what is happening, the student's challenges, and the strengths."*

### 3 Helps to keep track of student goals and progress

*"I think it's a great way to document a student's goals and progress."*

Below is the most common **negative** feedback, with illustrative quotes (14 participants provided negative qualitative feedback):

### 1 Not enough online interaction/participation

*"Goalbook was hardly ever used by the 'team' -- just some cursory comments every now and then. For me/my youth, it was not an effective tool."*

### 2 Should not take the place of face-to-face interaction

*"Goalbook is a good starting place for information sharing, setting meeting times, or outlining a possible plan to address a concern. It does not take the place of face-to-face meetings, especially for the youth to share their feelings."*

## Progress on Outcomes Indicators

RTI is tracking a number of outcomes indicators for the evaluation, including some related to youth and others related to Educational Champions (see Appendix A). The Year 1 Evaluation Report described the progress made on many but not all of the outcomes indicators. Most importantly, education data such as students' attendance rates and grades were not included in the Year 1 report. This was due largely to the slower-than-expected Foster Focus linking process.

This Year 2 report does include important education indicators of attendance and grades based on linked education data and also manually entered education data transferred from hard copies of students' school records. Additionally, the adult team member survey administered in October 2014 asked respondents about their perceptions of youth outcomes. By triangulating the education data from schools and the adult team members' perceptions, this report is able to describe for the first time students' educational indicators before and after joining FosterEd.

In addition to youth and Educational Champion outcomes, RTI has also identified, with FosterEd, a program-level outcome of improved collaboration between educators, child welfare professionals, community-based organizations, and the court. Finally, RTI is tracking a number of state-level outcomes identified by FosterEd as goals to achieve beyond the Santa Cruz County pilot project which reflect their state policy and practice efforts (see Appendix A for these program-level and state-level outcomes).

It is important to point out that it is impossible to isolate the impact that FosterEd has had on these state-level policy and practice changes. Nevertheless, based on FosterEd's role in the

IEOCC and RTI's knowledge of FosterEd state-level efforts, RTI is comfortable reporting on the state outcomes as a reflection of FosterEd's efforts, with the important caveat that the impact of its contributions cannot be disentangled from the contributions of others working at the state level. It is also important to note that FosterEd's state-level efforts have been supported by their involvement in the Education Equals Partnership, even before Santa Cruz became a fourth demonstration county in the Partnership.

### Youth Outcomes

#### *How many unmet educational needs were identified and addressed?*

RTI and FosterEd agreed to consider the identification of the educational needs of foster youth as an outcome. This is because educational needs have historically not been given adequate attention by the adults working with these youth, who are often more focused on the other critical dimensions of safety and well-being. Since FosterEd aims to raise the profile and attention given to the educational needs and outcomes of foster youth, simply identifying those needs is one outcome of the program.

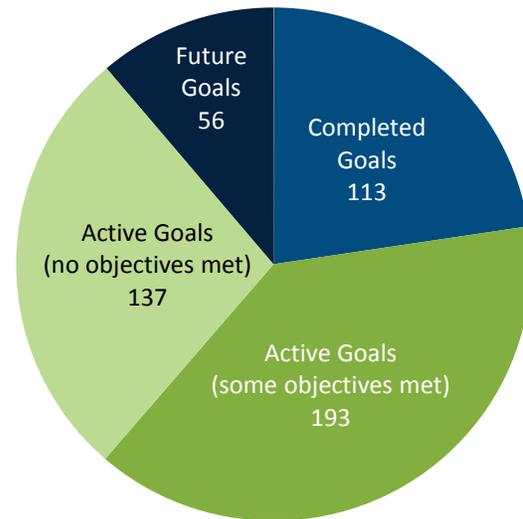
Reported in this section are goals set for youth who were involved in FosterEd in 2014 and therefore have education plan data in Goalbook. As noted earlier in this report, 45 foster youth were involved in FosterEd in 2013 but their cases closed before January 2014 and their education plan was not transferred to Goalbook. Thus, the goal counts represented in this section are an underestimate of the total number of goals set through the FosterEd program.

For the 173 foster youth whose FosterEd case was active at some point in 2014, and for whom consent to share their information in the evaluation was obtained, 694 goals had been set for foster youth. Each of these addressed an identified need of the foster youth. When establishing a goal, the education team also identifies objectives for achieving those goals. An example is setting a goal for improved attendance and identifying approximately three objectives to meet that goal, such as the caregiver establishing a 9:00 p.m. bedtime, the child rising with an alarm clock, and the child having no absences or tardies for 6 weeks.

**Figures 15 and 16** present the status of these goals for Active and Forming Students Teams, and Closed and On Hold Student Teams, respectively. Most of the goals (499) were associated with Active or Forming Teams. Among those, 113 had been completed, 193 were active and some of the objectives had been met, 137 were active but no objectives had yet been met, and 56 were identified as “future” goals. To help keep teams focused, teams typically have no more than three goals active at any time. If more than three goals have been identified, some are noted as future goals to be addressed once a more urgent goal has been met.

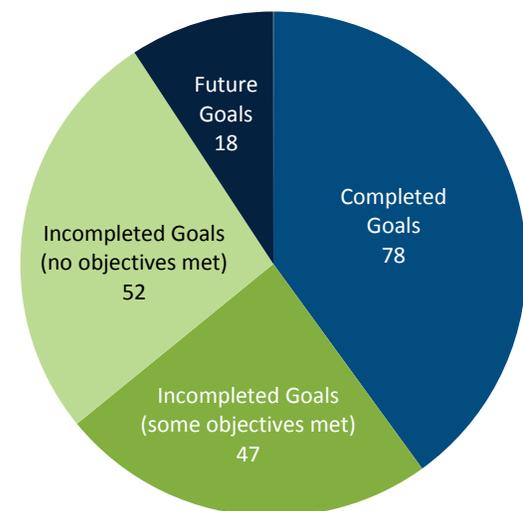
Of the total 694 student goals set, 195 are associated with closed or on hold teams. Among those, 78 had been met. 47 had been active goals that were not completed when the team closed or was put on hold, but progress had been made on the goal. 52 were not completed when the team closed or was put on hold, and progress had not been made on the goal, while 18 had been identified as future goals and had not been activated.

**FIGURE 15: Status of Student Goals, for Active and Forming Teams (Counts)**



SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

**FIGURE 16: Status of Student Goals, for Closed and On Hold Teams (Counts)**



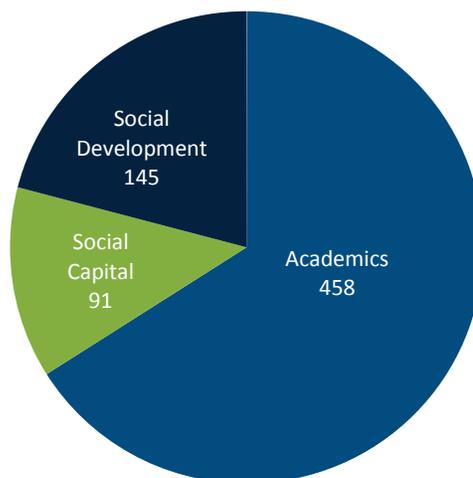
SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

### What types of goals have been set for youth?

**Figure 17** reports the general categories of the 694 goals that have been set for foster youth. The largest group (458) were academic, followed by social development (145) and social capital (91).

**Table 7** describes the academic, social capital, and social development goals identified for students. One thing to note is the variety of types of goal descriptions: 28 different kinds of goals were identified across all of the student cases. Among the academic goals, the top five were improving their reading, math, and writing proficiency, ensuring the youth were enrolled in appropriate schools and classes, and ensuring they were receiving adequate Special Education or 504 plan support. Within the social development category, the most common goal set related to extra-curricular activities. Within the social capital category, the most common goal set concerned additional adult supports.

**FIGURE 17: Category of Student Goals (Counts)**



SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

**TABLE 7: Description of Student Goals**

Academics			
Goal Title	Count	Goal Title	Count
Reading Level	70	Attendance	21
Math Level	64	College Readiness	21
Writing Level	59	Career Readiness	13
Enrollment in Appropriate Schools and Classes	46	Academic records / credits	10
Special Education / 504 Accommodations	37	Special Ed. / Behavior Support Plan	4
Academic Proficiency	30	Appropriate ESL services	2
Academic Supplies	27	Special Ed. / Speech & Language	2
Course Completion	25	Work Habits	3
CAHSEE Completion	23	Math and Writing Level	1
Grade progression	22		
Social Development			
Goal Title	Count	Social Capital	
Extracurricular Activities	85	Goal Title	Count
Behavior and School Discipline	39	Additional Adult Supports	40
Future Expectations	20	Positive Peer Relationship	32
Extra-curricular Activities and Adult Support	1	Positive School Staff Relationship	13
		Education Rights	6

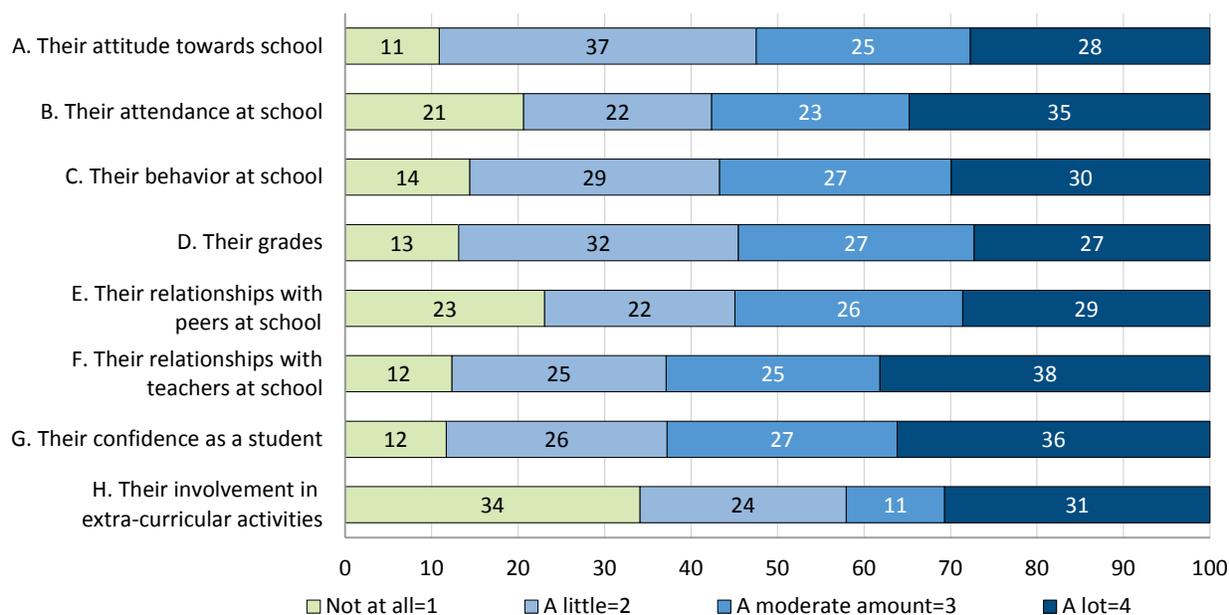
SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

### What do adult team members perceive as the impacts of FosterEd on foster youth?

Adult team members' perception of the impact of FosterEd on participating youth was assessed in the survey (**Figure 18**). At least 75 percent of adult respondents perceived at least "a little"

positive impact of FosterEd on each of the dimensions, with the exception of increased involvement in extra-curricular activities. **Table 8** shows the mean responses by team member role type. CASAs, the teacher subgroup and the social worker subgroup generally perceived the highest levels of positive impact.

FIGURE 18: Perceived Impacts of FosterEd on Youth, from the Perspective of Adult Team Members ( Percent)



SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

TABLE 8: Perceived Impacts of FosterEd on Youth, by Adult Team Member Role Type (Average Response)

Item	Parent, Relative, Caregiver, Social Worker, Teacher or School or District Staff			
	CASA	Foster Parent	Social Worker	Teacher or School or District Staff
A. Their attitude towards school	3.1	2.3	2.5	2.8
B. Their attendance at school	3.1	2.1	3.1	3.0
C. Their behavior at school	3.2	2.2	2.9	2.8
D. Their grades	3.0	2.1	2.9	2.8
E. Their relationships with peers at school	3.0	2.2	3.0	2.7
F. Their relationships with teachers at school	3.3	2.6	3.1	2.9
G. Their confidence as a student	3.1	2.5	3.0	3.0
H. Their involvement in extra-curricular activities	2.4	2.0	3.5	2.6

SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014

### *What are youths' attendance rates and grades prior to and after joining FosterEd?*

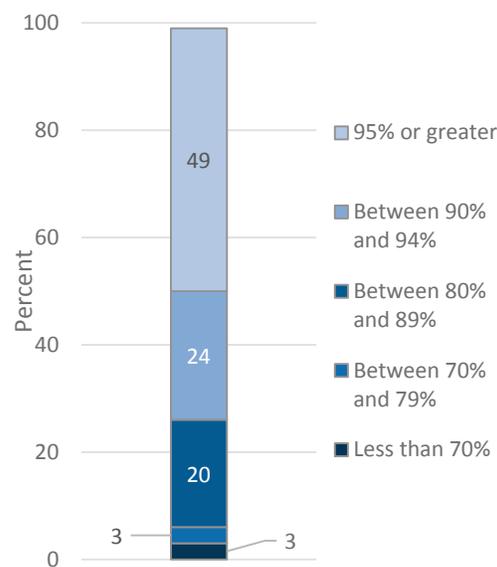
Sufficient education data from students' schools were not available in time for inclusion in the Year 1 report. Throughout 2014, however, district linkages with Foster Focus proceeded and Education Liaisons manually entered education records obtained from schools which were not linked with Foster Focus. These two data activities enabled the evaluator to examine attendance rates and grade point averages (GPA) for foster youth both before and after they joined the FosterEd program. The analyses were conducted for youth who were involved in FosterEd for at least two months, and for whom "before" and "after" FosterEd data were available.

Although the goal was to capture "before" and "after" education data for all youth who participated in FosterEd, some FosterEd cases closed abruptly as youth moved out of county or left foster care, and obtaining "after" education data was sometimes impossible. This data problem was particularly acute for GPA, an indicator which is calculated at the end of each school term, as opposed to the more frequent time interval for attendance rates, which is calculated monthly. Another limitation of the GPA analysis is that GPAs were only available for high school students, as elementary schools and even middle schools do not have standard grading systems. Despite these data challenges, RTI is comfortable presenting the following educational outcomes analyses in this Year 2 report. RTI will continue to analyze and report on education data in Year 3 of the evaluation.

### Attendance

**Figure 19** presents students' attendance rates prior to entering FosterEd for the 147 foster youth who had been active in FosterEd for at least two months, and for whom attendance data were available prior to and after joining FosterEd. Almost half of the foster youth entered FosterEd with a very high attendance rate of 95 percent or greater, and an additional 24 percent of students had rates between 90 and 94 percent.<sup>2</sup> While the FosterEd staff and evaluator were initially surprised by these high attendance rates, they are in line with attendance rates for foster youth observed in one of the other Education Equals counties.

**FIGURE 19: Students' Attendance Rates Prior to Joining FosterEd**



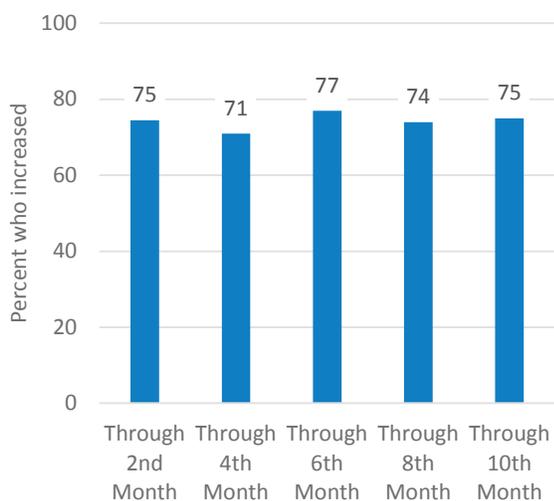
Note: Included in the figure are 147 youth whose cases were active in FosterEd for at least two months and who had attendance data available for prior to and after joining FosterEd.

SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Students needed at least one month of "before" FosterEd attendance data to be included in the analysis. Up to six months of "before FosterEd" attendance data were included for a student in cases where it was available.

The analysis of attendance rates “after joining” FosterEd was separated for youth who entered FosterEd with a very high attendance rate and those who did not. **Figure 20** reports the percent of foster youth who *increased* their attendance rates among those who entered with an attendance rate lower than 95 percent. Data are shown for multiple time periods. For example, the bar for “Through 4<sup>th</sup> month” reports the percent of foster youth who increased their attendance rate over the four month period since joining FosterEd. Multiple time periods were calculated to examine the stability of attendance rate increases. We examined attendance over time to assess the possibility that foster youth might experience a boost upon entering FosterEd, but that the increase might wane.

**FIGURE 20: The Percent of Foster Youth who Increased their Attendance, Among those who Entered with Less Than a 95% Attendance Rate**



Note: The denominator for each of the bars, from left to right, is: 75, 68, 56, 48, 40.

SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

The results in Figure 20 reveal that approximately three-quarters of foster youth who entered FosterEd with less than a 95 percent attendance rate increased their attendance. This proportion is relatively stable across all time periods examined. Thus, it is not the case that foster youth experience a spike in

attendance that then subsides, but rather that the increase is relatively stable through the 10<sup>th</sup> month.

**Table 9** shows the median percentage point increase in students’ attendance rates at each of the time periods, for those approximately 75 percent students in Figure 20 who did increase. To provide context for percentage point increases, they can be translated in additional days of attendance. All Santa Cruz County public schools have 180 school days per year. A one percentage point increase in attendance means the youth attended 1.8 additional days over the course of a year.

**TABLE 9: Median Percentage Point Increase Among Foster Youth who Entered FosterEd with Less Than a 95% Attendance Rate and Increased their Rate**

Through 2nd Month	8.2
Through 4th Month	10.7
Through 6th Month	8.8
Through 8th Month	9.3
Through 10th Month	9.3

SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

It is important to point out that the increases shown in Table 9 are not additive. In other words, it is not appropriate to interpret the table to mean that at month two the median increase was 8.2 percentage points, and then at month four an additional increase of 10.7 percentage points was observed in the data. Each of the median point increases are in reference to students’ “before” FosterEd attendance rate.

**Table 10** reports the median percentage point decreases among the approximately 25 percent of youth who entered FosterEd with less than a 95 percent attendance rate and did not increase

their attendance. Like the percentage points increases in Table 9, the fluctuations are sizable.

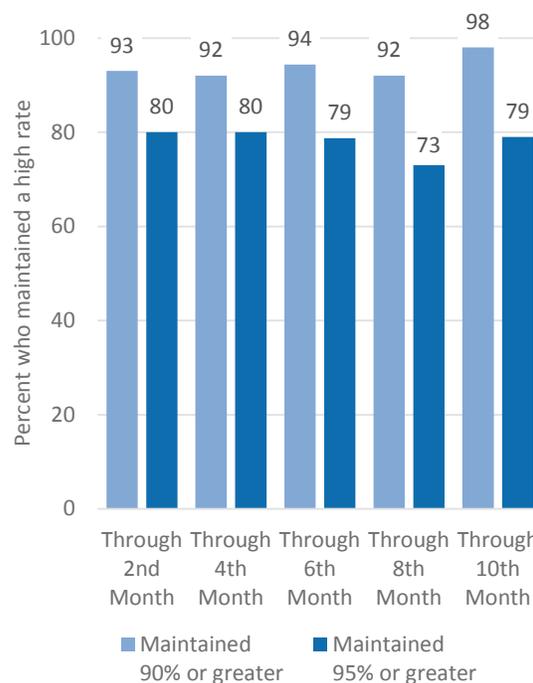
**TABLE 10: Median Percentage Point Decrease Among Foster Youth who Entered FosterEd with Less Than a 95% Attendance Rate and Decreased their Rate**

Through 2nd Month	-13.7
Through 4th Month	-10.9
Through 6th Month	-4.9
Through 8th Month	-11.7
Through 10th Month	-9.6

SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

**Figure 21** presents information on youth who joined the FosterEd program with less than a 95 percent attendance rate. For this group, the analysis examined the proportion who *maintained* a high attendance rate. The dark blue bars report the percent who maintained a 95 percent or greater attendance rate, and the light blue bars report the percent who maintained a 90 percent or greater rate. Over 90 percent of the foster youth who entered FosterEd with at least a 95 percent attendance rate maintained an attendance rate of 90 percent or greater, and about 80 percent maintained the very high attendance rate of 95 percent. These results held across the 10 months examined.

**FIGURE 21: The Percent of Foster Youth who Maintained High Attendance Rates, Among those who Entered with at Least a 95% Attendance Rate**



Note: The denominator for each of the bars, from left to right, is: 72, 63, 47, 37, 28.

SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

**Table 11** reports the median percentage point decrease among the approximately 20 percent of students who entered FosterEd with an attendance rate of 95 percent and did not maintain that very high rate. The decreases range from -5.1 to -7.7 percentage points.

**TABLE 11: Median Percentage Point Decrease Among Foster Youth who Entered FosterEd with a 95% Attendance Rate and Decreased their Rate**

Through 2nd Month	-6.7
Through 4th Month	-6.9
Through 6th Month	-5.1
Through 8th Month	-7.7
Through 10th Month	-5.9

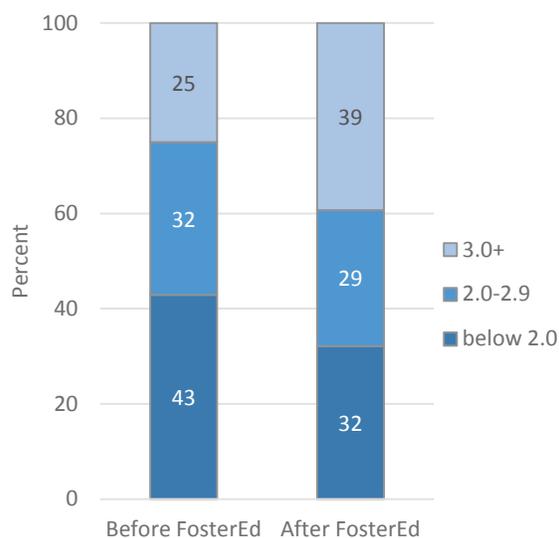
SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

## Grade Point Average

High school students' GPAs prior to and after joining FosterEd were also examined. The analysis is based on the 28 high school students who were active in FosterEd for at least two months, and for whom "prior to" and "after joining" GPA data were available.

**Figure 22** reports that 25 percent of these youth joined FosterEd with a 3.0 GPA or greater, while 43 percent had a 2.0 or below. In the school terms after joining FosterEd, 39 percent earned a 3.0 or higher, while 32 percent earned a 2.0 or lower.<sup>3</sup> Median GPA increased from 2.04 "prior to" FosterEd to 2.80 "after joining" FosterEd. Mean GPA increased from 2.14 to 2.40. These results are encouraging. However, due to the relatively small sample size, they should be interpreted with caution. RTI will continue to analyze GPA data in Year 3 of the evaluation, as more of the current high school students mark their second month in FosterEd and thus can be included in the analysis, and more high school students join the program.

FIGURE 22: High School Foster Youth's GPA Prior to and After Joining FosterEd



SOURCE: Foster Focus data extracted February 26, 2015.

## Educational Champion Outcomes

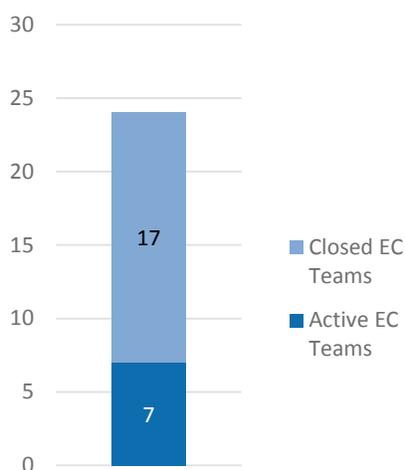
*How many Educational Champions had a goal to increase their capacity to support the youth educationally?*

FosterEd expects that some Educational Champions will need mentoring or coaching to effectively support and advocate for the youth. Some Educational Champions may not have been traditionally successful students themselves, and may not have the confidence or know-how to navigate school systems. Thus the FosterEd program includes a component that provides mentorship to the Educational Champions.

<sup>3</sup> The analysis shown in Figure 22 incorporated multiple terms (e.g. quarters or semesters) of "prior to" and "after joining" FosterEd for cases in which those data were available. Analyses examining only the most adjacent "prior to" and "after joining" terms yielded a similar pattern of results.

**Figure 23** reports the number of teams that have been formed to support the Educational Champion in developing their ability to advocate for and monitor their youth’s education. Educational Champion teams are comprised of the Educational Champion, a volunteer mentor, and an Education Liaison. During 2014, FosterEd had 24 Educational Champion teams. At the end of December, 17 of these teams had closed and 7 were active. Two of the Educational Champions did not agree to have their information included in the evaluation and therefore the remaining Educational Champion graphs in this section are for 22 of the 24 Educational Champion teams.

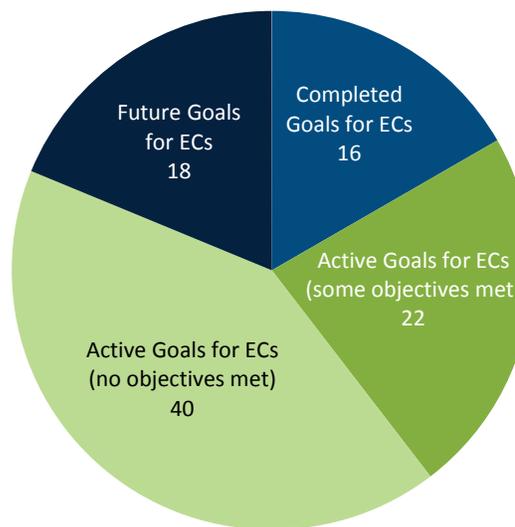
**FIGURE 23: Number of Educational Champion teams (Counts)**



SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

**Figure 24** shows the number and status of the goals set to increase the capacity of the Educational Champion. A total of 96 goals for 22 education teams had been set. The largest share of these goals (40) were active at the end of December and no objectives had yet been met. 22 of the goals were active and objectives had been met, while 16 goals had been met. 18 goals were identified as future goals to be worked on once other goals had been met or when there was a volunteer available to mentor the Educational Champion.

**FIGURE 24: Status of Goals to Increase the Capacity of Educational Champions (Counts)**



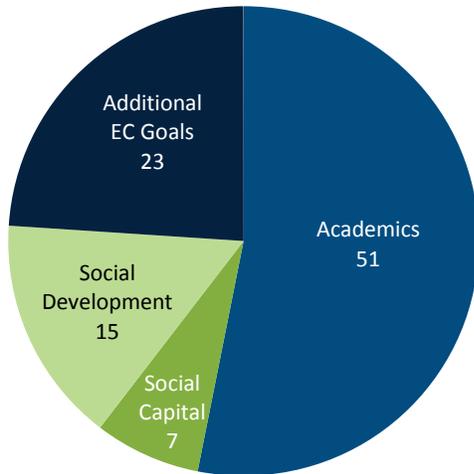
SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

**Figure 25** reports the subject of the Educational Champion goals. In developing a set of possible goals for Educational Champions, the FosterEd staff decided that the same types of goals that teams may set for youth are also the areas where the capacity of Educational Champions may need to be strengthened. For example, a youth’s team may identify improving attendance as a goal for the youth. Their Educational Champion may in turn need mentoring in supporting the youth in improving their attendance. Thus, goal subjects for youth and Educational Champions are aligned, and a fourth subject category called “Additional Educational Champion Goals” was established (see **Table 12** for a description of these goals).

There are four general categories of goals for Educational Champions. The most common category relates to strengthening their capacity to support the youth's academic experience. The second most common goal category is "Additional EC Goals."

**Table 12** describes the goals set for the Educational Champions. The single most common goal set for Educational Champions relates to strengthening their capacity to support and advocate for the Special Education/504 needs of their youth.

Figure 25: Categories of Goals to Increase the Capacity of Educational Champions (Counts)



SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

TABLE 12: Description of Education Champion Goals

<b>Academics</b>	
Special Education / 504 Accommodations	16
Reading Level	9
Attendance	5
Enrollment in Appropriate Schools and Classes	5
Academic Proficiency	4
College Readiness	3
Writing Level	3
Academic Supplies	2
Course Completion	2
Academic Records / Credits	1
Math Level	1
<b>Additional EC Goals</b>	
Communication with School	6
Facilitating Learning	6
Knowledge of Ed Rights	5
Monitoring Learning	5
Self-Efficacy	1
<b>Social Capital</b>	
Positive Peer Relationship	4
Additional Adult Supports	2
Positive School Staff Relationship	1
<b>Social Development</b>	
Extra-curricular Activities	7
Behavior and School Discipline	6
Future Expectations	2

SOURCE: Goalbook data extracted January 9, 2015.

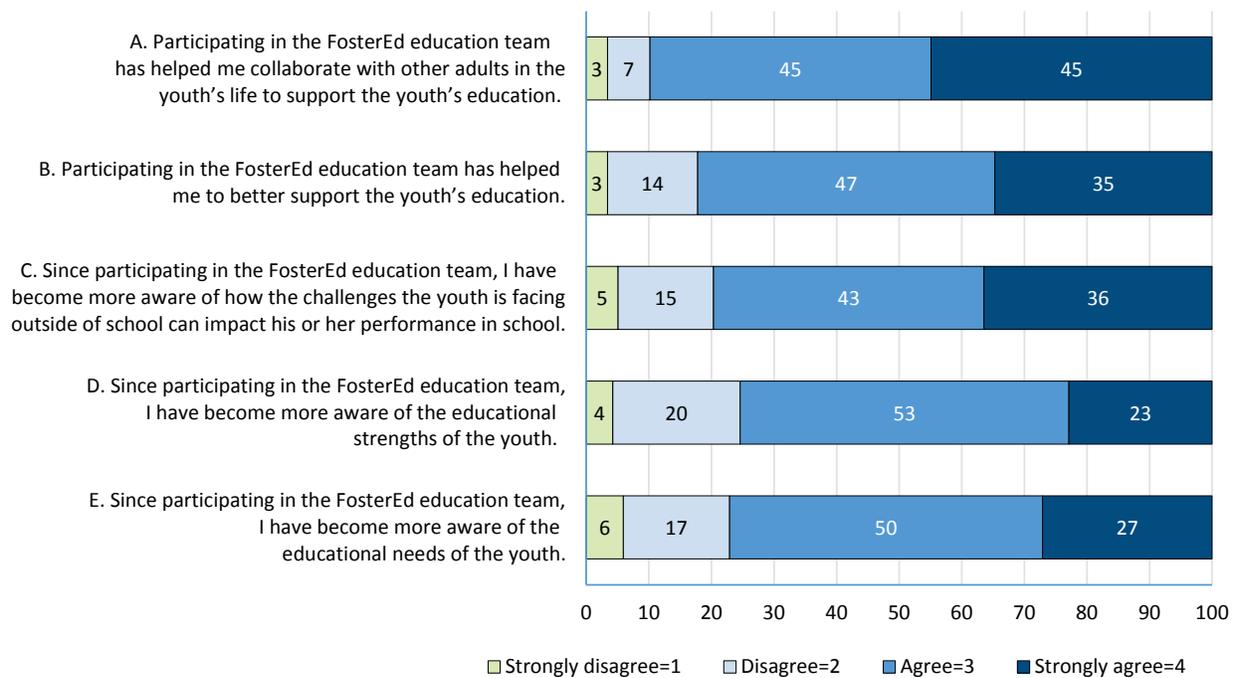
## Program Outcomes

In addition to asking adult team members about their perceptions of the educational impacts of FosterEd on the participating foster youth, the team member survey assessed a number of other dimensions, including team members' general feedback on the program, their experience with Goalbook, and the extent to which it has helped them collaborate with others to support the youth.

### *What are adult team members' perceptions of the FosterEd program?*

**Figure 26** reports the survey responses to a number of positive statements about FosterEd. At least 75 percent of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" to each of the statements. On each statement, each of the five main respondent groups had an average response above a calculated neutral position (i.e., 2.5) (**Table 13**).

FIGURE 26: Adult Team Members' Perceptions of the FosterEd Program (Percent)



SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

TABLE 13: Perceptions of the FosterEd Program, by Adult Team Member Role Type

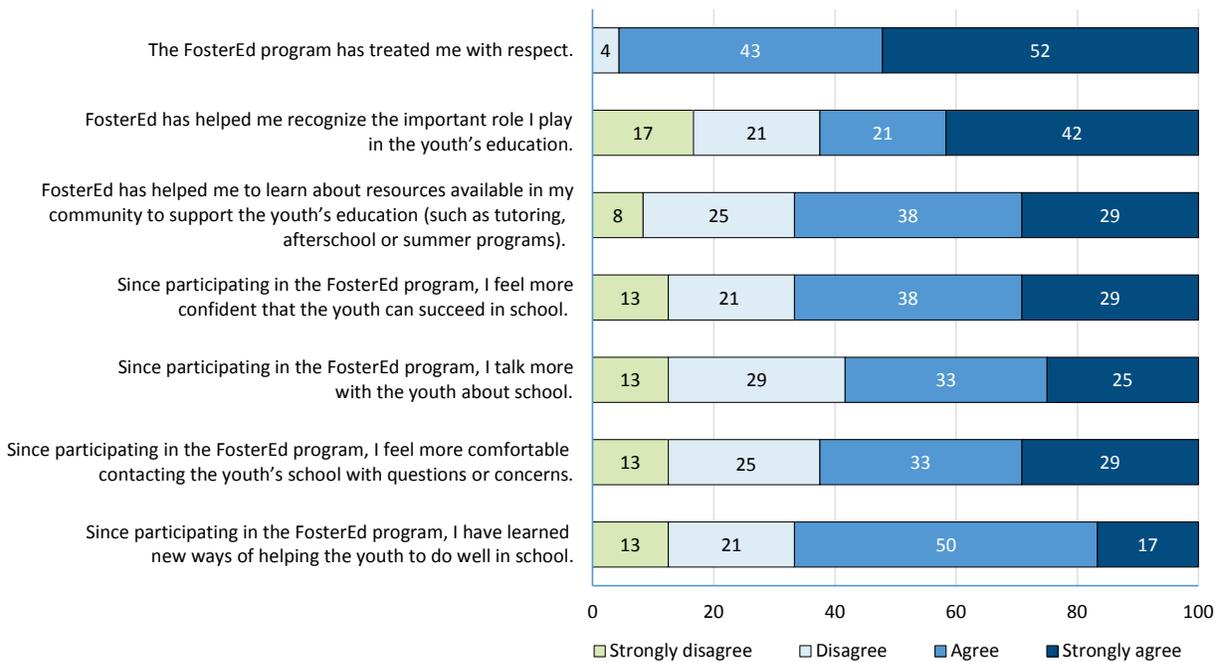
Item	CASA	Parent, Relative, Caregiver, Foster Parent	Social Worker	Teacher or School or District Staff
A. Participating in the FosterEd education team has helped me collaborate with other adults in the youth's life to support the youth's education.	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.3
B. Participating in the FosterEd education team has helped me to better support the youth's education.	3.3	2.8	3.3	3.1
C. Since participating in the FosterEd education team, I have become more aware of how the challenges the youth is facing outside of school can impact his or her performance in school.	3.3	2.7	3.0	3.2
D. Since participating in the FosterEd education team, I have become more aware of the educational strengths of the youth.	3.2	2.7	3.1	2.9
E. Since participating in the FosterEd education team, I have become more aware of the educational needs of the youth.	3.2	2.8	3.0	3.0

SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

**Figures 27-29** present results of specific questions asked of different survey respondent groups. Over half of the parent/caregiver subgroup reported that FosterEd helped them become a stronger educational supporter for their child on each dimension below (**Figure**

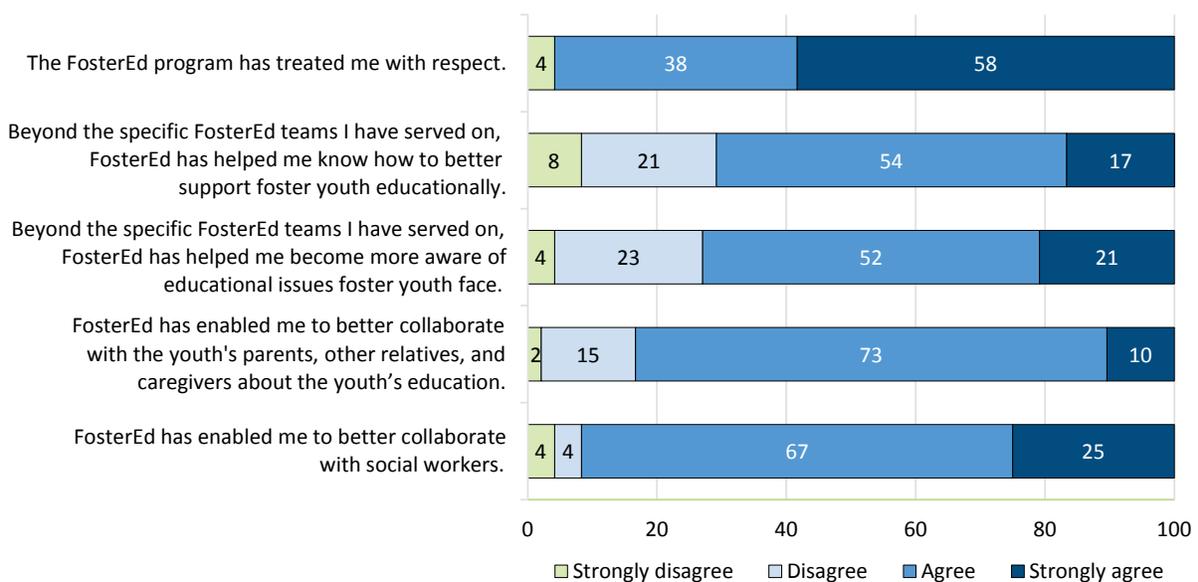
**27**). Nevertheless, a substantial portion of parents/caregivers did not find much benefit. As will be seen in **Figures 28 and 29**, other adult groups reported more benefits.

FIGURE 27: Specific Survey Questions Asked of Parents, Relatives, Caregivers, Foster Parents



SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

FIGURE 28: Specific Survey Questions Asked of Teachers, School and District Staff (Percent)

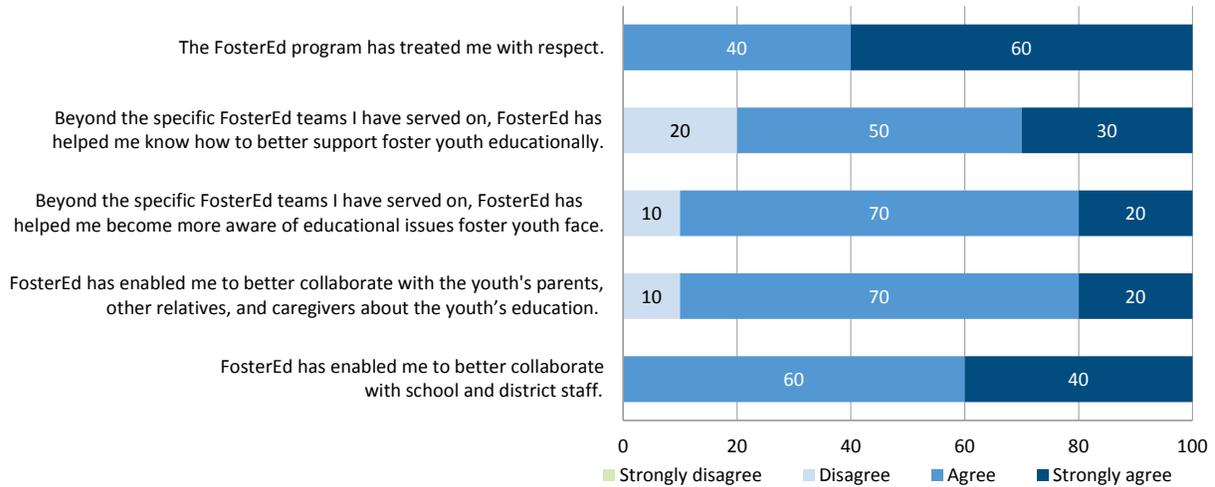


SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

Over 70 percent of the teachers/district/school staff subgroup reported that FosterEd helped them to better support foster youth educationally and increased their awareness of the educational issues facing foster youth

(Figure 28). 92 percent reported that it helped them better collaborate with social workers.

FIGURE 29. Specific Survey Questions asked of Social Workers (Percent)



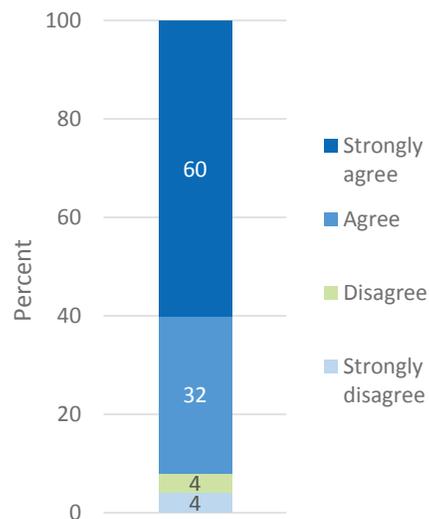
SOURCE: Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

Figure 29 reports that 80 percent of social workers reported that FosterEd helped them to better support foster youth educationally, and 90 percent reported becoming more aware of the educational issues facing foster youth. 100 percent reported that it helped them better collaborate with school and district staff.

*Would adult team members recommend FosterEd to other adults in the lives of foster youth?*

Over 90 percent of adult team members who responded to the survey indicated that they would recommend FosterEd to other adults in the lives of foster youth (60 percent strongly agreed, and 32 percent agreed) (Figure 30).

FIGURE 30: Percent of Adult Team Members who Would Recommend FosterEd



SOURCE: To Adult Team Members Survey, October 2014.

When asked to explain their answer to whether they would recommend the FosterEd program to other adults in the lives of foster youth, 99 participants responded.

Below is the most common **positive** feedback, with illustrative quotes (84 participants responded positively):

### 1 Facilitates collaboration and communication

*"This is the connection that has been missing for so long. This is the right hand becoming connected to the left hand so that our efforts become more meaningful and more powerful through being part of one team with common goals. I believe that this model can be very powerful."*

*"It linked me with supporters of the student whom I would not have known or known about otherwise."*

### 2 Provides an opportunity to access additional resources for foster youth and offers a support network to more efficiently navigate the educational system

*"Understanding the education system can be tough. FosterEd helps you to understand how the system works and gives you the tools you need to better advocate for the youth."*

### 3 Provides motivation to stay on track both for youth and their supporters

*"We foster parents need all the help we can get and the FosterEd program motivates, supports, and enables us to advocate for our child's educational rights."*

Below is the most common **negative** feedback, with illustrative quotes (7 participants responded negatively):

### 1 Not enough interaction

*"Again, I strongly support the concept of FosterEd, but one full meeting in 9 months does not accomplish much. Most of what I needed to get to help my youth was [...] not through the FosterEd team."*

### 2 The FosterEd program should be more inclusive/have more buy-in

*"I strongly agree that Foster Ed helps youth succeed. Unfortunately, foster parents who are not part of the digital era are left out."*

*"I believe students need to have buy-in for the program to work."*

## What suggestions do adult team members have for improving FosterEd?

When asked whether they had any suggestions for improving the FosterEd program, 46 adult team members surveyed offered suggestions. Below are the most common themes, with illustrative quotes:

### 1 Involving teachers and schools more, including fostering better and more open communication

*"Be cognizant of teacher's schedules and the school culture. The program may suffer from lack of school/teacher support if the volunteers or liaisons are perceived as being 'bothersome.' "*

*"This program should be inside the school daily. Not on the outside looking in, but part of the*

*daily school life of the child to give the child more support. Not just online or a monthly meeting.”*

## **2** Involving parents more and in different ways, and involving youth more

*“My biggest obstacle was [with] the parent and the follow-through of the student. I think the support helped them, but it was hard for them to buy in to the program.”*

*“It works great, just need to get parents more motivated and involved, which is hard I know.”*

## **3** More in-person meetings and other forms of communication

*“I would like to see the meetings between all team members happen more frequently when possible.”*

*“More information from [the] team on Goalbook more often.”*

## **4** Concern about Education Liaison work load, resources for the program

*“Increase Liaison staff to lighten the case load to prevent burnout of the existing dedicated, knowledgeable and effective staff.”*

## *Sustainability*

Since planning for the FosterEd Santa Cruz County project, the National Center for Youth Law and County Leadership Team have had a goal to secure public funding for the project after the pilot, which was initially financed by a federal grant and philanthropic sources (see page 1). During 2014, the Project Manager of FosterEd Santa Cruz County and members of the County Leadership Team increased their focus on being able to sustain FosterEd Santa Cruz County after the pilot. By the end of 2014, the partners were working on a strategy to

embed FosterEd within the Santa Cruz County Office of Education through mixed funding from Family and Children’s Services, the County Office of Education, and school districts.

As of the writing of this report, funding was secured to transfer two of the three Education Liaison roles to County Office of Education positions beginning July 1, 2015. Funding for this is being provided by both Family and Children’s Services and the County Office of Education. The third Education Liaison is already a County Office of Education employee, using federal Title IV-E funds. With philanthropic funding, FosterEd will continue to support the full-time Project Manager position until funding secured, with an eye towards having that funding in place by June 2016.

## State Outcomes

As noted in the beginning of this section, RTI is tracking a number of state-level outcomes identified by FosterEd as goals to achieve beyond the Santa Cruz County pilot project, which reflect its state policy efforts. Although it is impossible to quantify or isolate NCYL's contributions to the state outcomes, RTI is comfortable reporting on them as a reflection of FosterEd's efforts given knowledge of the extent of its involvement in state working groups and other state-level activities, including as members of the Education Equals Partnership.

NCYL did not expect to achieve all of these state outcomes during the Santa Cruz County pilot, but rather by the end of the pilot or in the first few years following the pilot. Nevertheless, all of the 13 state-level outcomes were either attained by the end of Year 2 of the pilot, or substantial progress was made. Many of these were achieved through a sweeping education reform called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), signed into law by California's governor in July 2013 with many of its provisions taking effect by January 1, 2014.

FosterEd led a broad array of stakeholder agencies and organizations in asking that foster youth be meaningfully included in the LCFF. These efforts resulted in the LCFF legislation recognizing foster youth as one of three student subgroups requiring additional educational resources and supports; school districts being required to draft goals and objectives specific to closing the foster youth achievement gap; California becoming one of the first states to inform school districts which of their students are in foster care; and California becoming the first state to hold school districts accountable for improving the educational outcomes of foster youth as a student subgroup.

## Local Control Funding Formula

The LCFF creates new opportunities throughout California because it gives much greater control to districts in determining how they spend their state funds. It also provides additional funds to school districts for low-income students, English language learners, and foster youth. Specifically, the policy allows:

- **Foster youth to become visible.** The California Department of Education, working in partnership with the California Department of Social Services, now notifies districts weekly about which of their students are in foster care.
- **Goals for foster youth to be set and tracked.** Districts are asked to establish goals for their foster youth, set metrics for measuring progress, and outline services and strategies for meeting these goals in their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP).
- **Public awareness of the educational performance of foster youth.** Schools and districts will report performance data for foster youth to the state, just as they currently do for other subgroups of students, such as English language learners, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities.

LCFF presents important leverage points for FosterEd Santa Cruz County and the other Education Equals Partnership demonstration counties, given that the law's main components of increased visibility and the need to set and track educational goals for foster youth are exceptionally well-aligned with the core elements of the Partnership. As the first state in the country to do so, California has an unparalleled opportunity to lead the way in supporting foster youth to thrive in school and beyond.

Through LCFF, the following state-level goals have been met. It is important to note that while the existence of policy aligned to these goals is a major achievement, much work remains to effectively implement them.

 Legislation requiring data sharing between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Department of Education (CDE) and between CDE and Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

Data sharing statutes were codified in law and became effective January 1, 2014, and MOUs were signed between CDSS and CDE to implement the statute.

 Data sharing between CDSS and CDE

CDSS and CDE have begun the formal match process and are sharing these data with local school districts. They continue to refine the data match on the number of foster youth to increase the match rate. FosterEd works closely with CDE to help troubleshoot the data based on the experience in Santa Cruz County.

 Data sharing between CDE and LEAs related to students in foster care

In November 2014, LEAs for the first time received through CALPADS the identification of their students in foster care. CDE issued guidance to the LEAs regarding how to understand the data and also provided self-paced web resources on how to utilize it. These trainings were developed in collaboration with FosterEd which is also working with CDE on state and regional in-person trainings to ensure that local jurisdictions are aware of how best to utilize the data.

 Legislation holding schools and school districts accountable for the educational outcomes of foster youth

These statutes were codified in law and became effective January 1, 2014. The state is currently developing the new Academic Performance Index (API) and transitioning to statewide use of Common Core State Standards assessments in 2015. The tests have yet to be administered statewide. FosterEd is monitoring this work and focused on LCFF implementation rubrics to ensure that the intent of the legislation is manifested.

 Legislation requiring school districts to develop plans detailing how they will improve the educational outcomes of foster youth

These statutes were codified in law and became effective January 1, 2014. These plans are referred to as the Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs). During the first year of LCFF implementation, LEAs were to describe actions and services that would benefit foster youth. Many school districts did not list what those specific actions would be. FosterEd commissioned SRI International, a research organization involved in other studies of LCAPs, to develop a brief highlighting the opportunities and challenges of LCAP development. That brief can be accessed at:

[http://www.sri.com/sites/default/files/publications/fosteryouth\\_lcff\\_final\\_3\\_3\\_15.pdf](http://www.sri.com/sites/default/files/publications/fosteryouth_lcff_final_3_3_15.pdf)

 Meaningful guidance and model plans/templates developed and used by the CDE and SBE

In May 2014, the State Board of Education issued an update on the status of LCFF implementation for foster youth and shared resources to assist the field in developing LCAPs for foster youth. Resources from the California Foster Youth Education Task Force were

included, amongst others. The sharing of model plans is expected to happen over the next year as strong LCAPs emerge. In September 2014, FosterEd provided a formal update on LCFF implementation for foster youth and additional updates are to occur in the future.

### *Other State-Level Outcomes Unrelated to LCFF*

 Improved judicial process and forms to identify a foster child's education rights holder developed and used outside of Santa Cruz County

Policy efforts conducted in close collaboration with the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families, Children & the Courts (AOC), and with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), were successful. FosterEd partnered with the AOC to improve the rules of court and judicial forms used in dependency proceedings to identify an education rights holder for each foster child. The Judicial Council accepted the proposed changes, which became effective statewide on January 1, 2014.

 Standardized MOU for use in using FYS funds to leverage Title IV-E funds developed and used outside of Santa Cruz County

FosterEd partnered with the CDSS to draft a template MOU for use by county offices of education and county child welfare agencies, to use Foster Youth Services (FYS) funds to leverage federal Title IV-E funds, which in turn are used to provide education case management to students in foster care. The template is based on the one developed for Santa Cruz County and is expected to bring over \$5 million in additional federal funding to California's FYS programs. The template MOU has been approved by CDSS' legal counsel and

distributed by the California Foster Youth Education Task Force.

 Improved statutes governing the Foster Youth Services (FYS) program

Legislation has been introduced to update the FYS program in 2015 to align with the new Local Control Funding Formula and to ensure that the LCFF is effectively implemented for students in foster care.

 Improved FYS Request for Proposal (RFP)

The FYS RFP is driven by state statutes and will be directly impacted by the FYS legislation (if passed). FosterEd is working closely with the CDE to ensure that changes in the RFP will be reflective of the updated FYS statutes.

 Use of Goalbook outside of Education Equals counties

FosterEd continues to use Goalbook as the primary educational case management and teaming tool for its pilot project in Pima County, Arizona. A number of California jurisdictions, including Oakland Unified School District, are planning to begin using Goalbook in 2015.

 Use of Education Champion resource modules outside of Santa Cruz County

Staff from FosterEd Arizona developed a modified version of the resource modules, using the Santa Cruz County and California standardized versions as a model. The Santa Cruz County, California standardized, and Arizona versions of the modules are all available for free download on the FosterEd website (<http://foster-ed.org/resourcesscc.html>). FosterEd does not track how often the materials are downloaded, or by whom. FosterEd frequently shares the link for these materials when they present at conferences, and when

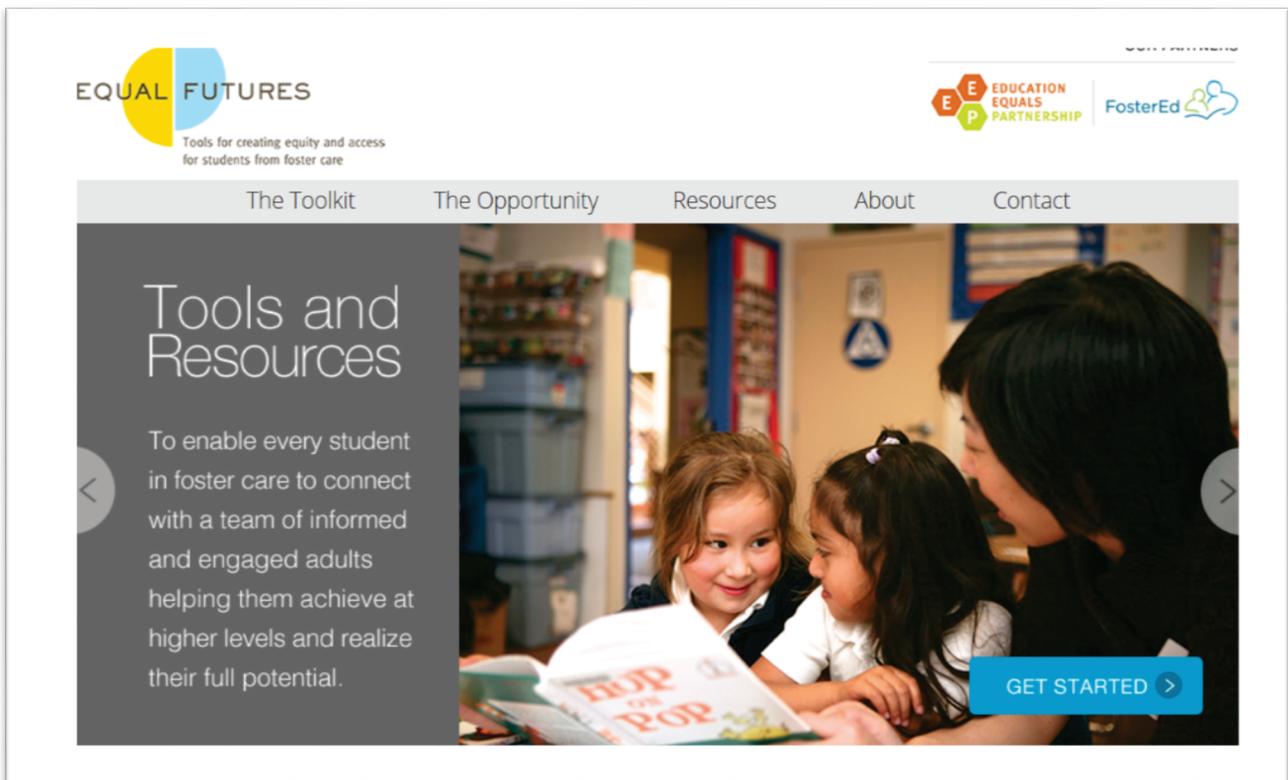
individuals or agencies in other jurisdictions contact FosterEd for information and resources.



FosterEd and the Education Equals Partnership have recently assembled tools and resources developed and used in Santa Cruz and the other three Education Equals demonstration counties to share across the state. The tools are available on EqualFutures.org, a resource created to support school districts, county offices of

education, community-based organizations and other agencies in improving educational outcomes for students from foster care. The toolkit includes resources for “Creating the Framework,” such as building an oversight team and setting program strategy, “Building the Program,” such as resources for assessing student strengths and needs and developing education plans, and “Evaluating Results” for program improvement.

<http://equalfutures.org/>



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## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Year 1 report concluded that the launch and first year of implementation of FosterEd Santa Cruz County had been remarkably successful. It noted that rarely do complex initiatives involving many partners and multiple system changes achieve so much so early. The strong forward momentum of FosterEd did not wane in Year 2. Major, well thought-out adjustments to the model were introduced and refined, and education outcomes data reveal positive findings regarding attendance and GPA, which were consistent with perceptions of adult team members regarding the impact of FosterEd on youth. The collaboration among agency partners continued to be strong, and important achievements in state policy present unprecedented opportunities for California to better support the education of our youth in foster care.

### Successful Transition to Education Teams

The largest adjustment made to the FosterEd Santa Cruz County model was the transition away from the original vision of focusing first and foremost on supporting Educational Champions, who ideally are the youth's biological parent or another adult expected to be in a youth's life long-term. In the original vision, FosterEd would provide mentoring to that adult to strengthen his or her capabilities to support the youth's education. Soon after the launch of the project, the Liaisons discovered that they were identifying many urgent unmet educational needs of youth, such as out-of-date Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, students on the verge of expulsion, and students lacking critical school

supplies. With the support of FosterEd leaders and the County Leadership Team, they decided they could not just stand by and witness the needs persist without intervention while they focused on the longer-term work of increasing the capacity of the Educational Champion. Education Liaisons found that trying to support both the youth directly and their Educational Champions at the same time was not sustainable.

By the end of Year 1, FosterEd and the County Leadership Team were re-designing the model to incorporate teams of adults. The goal in implementing this approach was to build a network of adult support around each student to address his or her educational needs and to improve collaboration among these adults. The teaming model was strongly endorsed by the County Leadership Team, and the partners worked diligently at the end of 2013 to revise practices and protocols in order to implement the teaming model at the beginning of 2014.

By the end of 2014, feedback from adults who have served on teams and from agency leaders has been quite positive. Challenges remain, including working towards the goal of every youth having a parent or caregiver and a district or school site staff member on their team. It is also important to recognize that teaming creates new responsibilities and time requirements. As noted by one interviewee:

*"In terms of the teaming process and new model, the big change for us is that it [has] meant an increase in responsibility for social workers who will now need to participate in the meetings and the online discussions. That was an increase in responsibility that we hadn't had before and it seems to have gone pretty smoothly. That may change a little bit now that the caseloads have bumped up a little bit – we've had a couple of resignations and retirements. Caseloads have increased from high teens/low twenties to high*

*twenties/low thirties, so it has been quite an increase. Their availability and ability to respond in Goalbook has been challenged a bit...but overall I think the sentiment is that FosterEd is a welcome addition. [It] helps that liaisons are in the office—[it] builds a collegial atmosphere – [there's] nothing better than having someone on site where you work."*

## Successful Transition to Goalbook

Customizing Goalbook in time for use at the beginning of 2014 without interrupting cases was a significant accomplishment for FosterEd and Goalbook staff. The feedback on the tool from adult team members was generally positive, with the shared sentiment that it cannot function as the sole communication method for all teams.

## Continued Strong Collaboration among Community Partners

The high level of engagement of agencies and community-based organizations as partners has continued and has been an essential ingredient for the success of the pilot. All parties deserve recognition for the role they have played in nurturing such effective collaborations. As noted by one County Leadership Team member during the Year 1 interviews:

*"There is nobody that is a part of the team or committee [who] isn't working from the highest ethical and well-intentioned place. I have never seen a project with more heart and less selfishness than this project."*

The strong collaborations and endorsement for the FosterEd project have recently been evident as partners have worked to identify public funding for the project in order for it to move from a largely philanthropic-supported pilot to

a sustained program embedded in a public agency. As of the writing of this report, all three Education Liaison positions will shift in the coming months to become County Office of Education employees, as opposed to National Center for Youth Law employees. Quotes from County Leadership Team members during the Year 1 and Year 2 interviews illustrate the enthusiasm for and commitment to FosterEd Santa Cruz County:

*"It's a marvelous thing, I love it, and I don't want it to go away."*

*"We can't not do this because it's working so well."*

## Improved Results for Attendance and GPA are Consistent with Adult Team Members' Positive Perceptions of FosterEd

Education data from schools in the form of attendance rates and GPA is consistent with the perception of adult team members that foster youth who participate in FosterEd benefit educationally. These are very encouraging early findings. The evaluator will continue working with the program to collect additional data in order to further examine the relationship between participating in FosterEd and improving on educational measures.

## Major State Policy Advancements to Support Foster Youth Informed by Santa Cruz County's Experience

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its associated provisions, such as the Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), present tremendous opportunities as California has become the first state in the country to help

schools and districts identify their foster youth and require that they develop plans to support the specific needs of these vulnerable students. Many aspects of LCFF as they relate to foster youth are aligned with core elements of FosterEd and the wider Education Equals Partnership. Given the involvement of these groups in advocating for the inclusion of foster youth in LCFF, this alignment is perhaps not surprising. These groups used the experience gained through programs like FosterEd to advocate for policies that can support stronger practices and encourage their spread.

## Recommendations

RTI offers the following recommendations for continuing to strengthen FosterEd Santa Cruz County in the third year of implementation, including its transition from a pilot project to a sustained publically financed project:

### 1 Recommendation: Strengthen youth engagement.

A common recommendation for improving FosterEd offered by the adult team members via the FosterEd feedback survey was to increase youth engagement and buy-in. When Goalbook data were extracted for this evaluation, only four youth had active accounts. The program does not have firm age guidelines, but typically invites youth age 14 or older to join their Goalbook team. Youth can be engaged with their education teams and goals outside of Goalbook, and therefore working to increase youth engagement should not focus solely on increasing participation in Goalbook. Nevertheless, the small number of youth on Goalbook suggests that there are opportunities to improve the degree to which youth are engaged with their teams and their education goals.

RTI recommends FosterEd also focus on collaborating with youth leaders to co-create practices and resources that can support other foster youth. This will be a focus of the Education Equals Partnership in the coming year, so that the lived experience, insights, and individual talents of young leaders can be infused throughout the Partnership. FosterEd has recently hired a part-time Youth Representative. This young professional has been a strong foster youth advocate for many years, including serving as president of the Santa Cruz chapter of California Youth Connection. This is a very promising step toward strengthening FosterEd with greater youth voice and expertise.

### 2 Recommendation: Continue to monitor and support teaming inside and outside of Goalbook.

Based on communication statistics from Goalbook, RTI suggests that FosterEd consider both how the program can encourage more communication within Goalbook, while also continuing to recognize that not all team members can be expected to use Goalbook effectively (e.g., they have limited or no access to technology, or they have limited English proficiency). Communication in Goalbook has increased and substantial portions of cases have multiple message per month. Nevertheless, a sizable and somewhat stable proportion of cases (about 25 percent) go a month at a time without Goalbook communication. RTI recommends FosterEd develop clearer plans and protocols both for supporting communication in Goalbook and for supporting team members who cannot collaborate through Goalbook.

**3** Recommendation: Reconsider the value of the volunteer program. If it is important, allocate resources so that the volunteers can be continually supported.

Statistics on the low number of volunteers and perspectives shared by Education Liaisons during the Year 2 focus group lead RTI to recommend that FosterEd and the County Leadership Team reconsider the value of a volunteer program. Successful volunteer programs require substantial allocations of resources to support recruitment, training, and ongoing support of volunteers. It may not be reasonable to expect that an Education Liaison can effectively cover her responsibilities to education teams and also oversee volunteers. If FosterEd and the Leadership Team think volunteers are critical to the success of FosterEd, RTI recommends they identify resources that can support a more robust volunteer program.

**4** Recommendation: Consider expanding FosterEd to serve Santa Cruz County youth placed out of county, out-of-county youth placed in Santa Cruz County, and probation youth.

The Year 2 interviews with Leadership Team members focused on questions related to sustainability and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the transition to education teams. The interview ended with the evaluator asking for any other suggestions for improving FosterEd. It was remarkable to the evaluator that three of the seven interviewees essentially had the same recommendation, and stated it quite strongly. They felt that FosterEd should be expanded to include broader categories of youth. Currently, only foster youth who are dependents of Santa Cruz County child welfare and who are placed in county are eligible. Santa Cruz County dependents placed out of county, and dependents from other counties who are

placed in Santa Cruz County, are not served. The interviewees noted that they interact with both sets of youth currently not served and see important needs for these youth. Another interviewee believed that probation youth would greatly benefit from the FosterEd model of identifying an Educational Champion, engaging an education team, and developing and supporting educational goals for these vulnerable youth.

**5** Recommendation: Continue supporting districts in developing and implementing strong supports for foster youth via LCAPs and LCFF.

This is a very important time for foster youth and their advocates. Continued work is needed to seize opportunities presented by LCFF. Schools and districts have multiple demands and priorities. FosterEd and members of the County Leadership Team should continue to deepen their relationships with Santa Cruz County districts, and offer tailored technical assistance to help districts develop strong supports for their foster youth with their LCFF funding and through their LCAPs.

**6** Recommendation: As staff and program management for FosterEd Santa Cruz County transfer from NCYL to county agencies, do not underestimate the need for continuing infrastructure support such as the Leadership Team. Be careful of diluting Education Liaisons' focus on cases with other county responsibilities.

The transition from a largely privately-funded pilot to a public agency-embedded program is something to celebrate. It has been a goal of NCYL and the County Leadership Team since early discussions of the potential pilot. As this transition to a public program is made, RTI suggests attention and resources continue to be given to the infrastructure of the program,

including the County Leadership Team. One interviewee noted,

*"In terms of succession, what is the Leadership Team's role in the future? Does this continue when National Center for Youth Law steps back? Some talk about this being a part of the [Foster Youth Services] meetings. To me it seems like FYS are down-and-dirty in specific things and not the 30,000 foot level of how things are going overall. I'd like to make the suggestion that a higher-level leadership team exist. The major players need to get together and see how we're doing, because those are the people who will be able to bring advocacy if things aren't going so well."*

RTI also suggests FosterEd staff and the County Leadership Team consider some of the risks associated with the program being embedded in a public agency. RTI has observed some benefits of the pilot being led by a community-based organization, rather than a public agency. As NCYL staff, FosterEd has been able to be very nimble and focused on the pilot. For the other Education Equal demonstration counties, public bureaucratic processes of hiring new or replacement Education Liaisons have caused complications and delays. When staffing shortages occur in other areas of the agencies, Education Liaisons have sometimes had to fill in for those shortages and therefore devote less time to responsibilities as Education Liaisons. RTI recommends the County Leadership Team consider that there are both benefits and risks of moving to a public agency-embedded program and be ready to address challenges that may arise.

## Closing

Having observed the development, launch, and first two years of implementation of FosterEd Santa Cruz County, RTI concurs with the overwhelmingly positive sentiments expressed by all members of the County Leadership Team. Their words close this report:

*"[The first year of implementation] has been very successful. The term 'FosterEd' is part of our culture. We've been trying to make education a centerpiece, and FosterEd has been the impetus to bring about changes we'd thought about but didn't think we had the power to do. Education is now on the table more than ever before. When I started, education was one line item in the court report. Now everyone is focused on education."*

*"I feel that fundamentally the way that foster youth are served as far as academic advocacy in Santa Cruz County has changed since FosterEd has taken effect. Foster Youth Services in Santa Cruz has been fairly reactionary since its infancy. There was just one person, so there was a capacity issue.... It was a mobile reactionary unit. FosterEd has shifted the paradigm. Now, people are getting a little used to the fact that if there's a foster youth there will be a team there and an Education Liaison. To the Education Liaisons' credit, they have found problems much sooner than would have popped up on [others'] radar."*

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### **About the Evaluator**

**Dr. Jennifer Laird** is Program Director in the Center for Evaluation and Equity Studies at RTI International. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology at Stanford University. Dr. Laird has 15 years of experience in education research and evaluation, with expertise in the intersection between education and child welfare, as well as in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) secondary education, and outside-of-school-time programs. In addition to the directing the evaluation of FosterEd Santa Cruz County, she directs the evaluation of FosterEd Arizona, and the evaluation of the Education Equals Partnership, a California statewide effort to improve educational outcomes for students from foster care, starting with preschool and extending across the entire education continuum. Four California counties — Fresno, Orange, Sacramento and Santa Cruz— are implementing a common agenda for change and tracking shared progress data metrics.

**RTI International** is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to conducting innovative, multidisciplinary research that improves the human condition. With a worldwide staff of more than 3,700 people, RTI is active in education, child welfare, justice systems, health and medicine, environmental protection, and international development. RTI maintains company headquarters in North Carolina, eight regional offices in the United States, 10 international offices, and many project-specific offices around the world. This project is conducted out of the Berkeley, California, office.



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# Appendix A

## Evaluation Indicators for FosterEd Santa Cruz County

Improvement in...		Report timing: Baseline*; semi-annual; annual	Data source/Comments	When change is first expected	Included in Y2 report?	
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
1	<b>Program</b>	Establishment and persistence of County Leadership Team	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations, Leadership Team interviews	First six months of project	Yes
2	<b>Program</b>	Engagement with California's Improving Educational Outcomes of Children in Care (IEOCC) workgroup	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	First six months of project	Yes
3	<b>Program</b>	Number of FosterEd staff hired and trained	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations, Leadership Team interviews	First six months of project	Yes
4	<b>Program</b>	Development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Interagency Agreements within the County	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations, Leadership Team interviews	First six months of project	Yes
5	<b>Program</b>	Customization of Foster Focus (FF) for FosterEd Santa Cruz	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, Sacramento County Office of Education, RTI observations	First six months of project	Yes
6	<b>Program</b>	Number and percentage of Santa Cruz County districts partially linked with FF, number and percentage of Santa Cruz County districts fully linked with FF	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, Sacramento County Office of Education	First six months of project	Yes
7	<b>Program</b>	Customization of Goalbook for FosterEd Santa Cruz County	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, Goalbook, RTI observations	First six months of project	Yes
8	<b>Program</b>	Development of Mentoring Modules	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	First six months of project	Yes
9	<b>Program</b>	Development of MOU to use Foster Youth Services funds to leverage Title IV-E funds	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations, Leadership Team interviews	First six months of project	Yes

Improvement in...		Report timing: Baseline*; semi-annual; annual	Data source/Comments	When change is first expected	Included in Y2 report?	
<b>Infrastructure—Continued</b>						
10	<b>Program</b>	Co-location of Education Liaisons at County Office of Education and Child Welfare offices	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, Leadership Team Interviews, Education Liaisons focus group	First six months of project	Yes
11	<b>Program</b>	Establishment of joint employment status for FosterEd Liaisons with the Notational Center for Youth Law and the County Office of Education	BL; 6 mos., annual	National Center for Youth Law, Leadership Team Interviews, Education Liaisons focus group	First six months of project	Yes
12	<b>Program</b>	Continue integrating FosterEd and the Education Equals Partnership	annual	National Center for Youth Law and the Stuart Foundation	Second year of project	Yes
<b>Practice</b>						
1	<b>Youth</b>	Number of youth participating in FosterEd (total and disaggregated by special needs, cases needing English language support)	BL; 6 mos., annual	Goalbook	First six months of project	Yes
2	<b>Ed Champion</b>	Number of youth for whom an Ed Champion is identified (number who are bio parents, number who are CASA, caregivers, etc.).	BL; 6 mos., annual	Goalbook	First six months of project	Yes
3	<b>Youth</b>	Number of teams created	BL; 6 mos., annual	Goalbook	First six months after teaming structure implemented	Yes
4	<b>Program</b>	Number of Goalbook users, by user type (Ed Liaison, SW, bio parent, foster parent, ed champion) and intensity of use.	BL; 6 mos., annual	Goalbook webmetrix data/report.	First six months after Goalbook implemented	Yes
5	<b>Program</b>	Number of volunteer education support people recruited, trained, and assigned to cases	BL; 6 mos., annual	NCYL records	First six months of project	Yes

Improvement in...		Report timing: Baseline*; semi-annual; annual	Data source/Comments	When change is first expected	Included in Y2 report?	
<b>Practice-Continued</b>						
<b>6</b>	<b>Ed Champion</b>	Number of presumed long-term caregivers (bio parents/relatives/foster parents) who want mentoring and are receiving mentoring, and the type of mentoring goals set	BL; 6 mos., annual	Goalbook	First six months after teaming structure implemented	Yes
<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>1</b>	<b>Youth</b>	Number of foster youth with unmet educational needs identified, number of needs identified (i.e., active and inactive goals set for youth in Goalbook), and type of needs identified (e.g., attendance, special ed resources)	BL; 6 mos., annual	Goalbook	First six months of project	Yes
<b>2</b>	<b>Youth</b>	Number and percentage of youth who improved on at least one active goal, number and percentage who improved on 2-3 active goals, number and percentage who improved on 4+ active goals	BL; annual	Goalbook	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	Yes, but reported at the goal level, not the youth level
<b>3</b>	<b>Youth</b>	Number and percentage of youth who completed at least one active goal, number and percentage who completed 2-3 active goals, number and percentage who completed 4+ active goals	BL; annual	Goalbook	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	Yes, but reported at the goal level, not the youth level
<b>4</b>	<b>Ed Champion</b>	Of bio parents/caregivers who had a goal set to improve their capacity, with the goal being active, percent who increased that capacity	BL; annual	Goalbook	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	Yes
<b>5</b>	<b>Youth/Ed Champion/Others</b>	Number and percentage of team members who report that participating in FosterEd has been beneficial to them (disaggregated by bio parent/caregiver, parent, social worker, school/district rep)	Annual	Survey of adult team members	9 months after teaming structure implemented	Yes. Year 1 report included results from a phone survey of Education Champions.

Improvement in...		Report timing: Baseline*; semi-annual; annual	Data source/Comments	When change is first expected	Included in Y2 report?	
6	<b>Program</b>	Improved collaboration between educators (local education agencies, state education agencies), child welfare (local and state), community-based organizations, and courts	Annual	Survey of adult team members and County Leadership Team interviews	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	Yes
<b>Outcomes—Continued</b>						
7	<b>Youth</b>	Increase in school attendance rates	Annual	Foster Focus	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	Yes
8	<b>Youth</b>	Increase in grades	Annual	Foster Focus	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	Yes
9	<b>Youth</b>	Decrease in suspensions and other behavioral incidents	Annual	Foster Focus	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	No, due to slower than expected FF linking process, data not available
10	<b>Youth</b>	Decrease in school mobility (e.g., decrease in percent of foster youth who move schools during the school year)	Annual	Foster Focus	After 1 <sup>st</sup> year of project	No, due to slower than expected FF linking process, data not available
11	<b>Program</b>	Funding to continue FosterEd in Santa Cruz County after the pilot	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, County Leadership Team interviews	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
12	<b>State</b>	Improved judicial process and forms to identify a foster child's education rights holder developed, and used outside of Santa Cruz County	Annual	National Center for Youth Law	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
13	<b>State</b>	Standardized MOU for use in using Foster Youth Services (FYS) funds to leverage Title IV-E funds developed and used outside of Santa Cruz County	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
14	<b>State</b>	Use of Goalbook outside of Education Equals Counties	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
15	<b>State</b>	Use of Education Champion resource modules outside of Santa Cruz County	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes

Improvement in...		Report timing: Baseline*; semi-annual; annual	Data source/Comments	When change is first expected	Included in Y2 report?	
16	State	Legislation requiring data sharing between California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and California Department of Education (CDE) and between CDE and Local Education Agencies (LEAs)	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
<b>Outcomes—Continued</b>						
17	State	Data sharing between CDSS and CDE	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	Yes
18	State	Data sharing between CDE and LEAs related to students in foster care	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
19	State	Legislation holding schools and school districts accountable for the educational outcomes of foster youth	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
20	State	Legislation requiring school districts to develop plans detailing how they will improve the educational outcomes of foster youth	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
21	State	Meaningful guidance and model plans/templates developed and adopted by the CDE and SBE	Annual	National Center for Youth Law	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
22	State	Improved statutes governing the FYS program	Annual	National Center for Youth Law	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
23	State	An improved FYS Request For Proposal	Annual	National Center for Youth Law	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes
24	State	Development of state-wide tools for implementing project to support foster youth	Annual	National Center for Youth Law, RTI observations	After Santa Cruz County pilot	Yes

\*BL – “Baseline” is defined as the launch of the project, but may want to adjust to launch of revised project (i.e., teaming structure, for some indicators). BL will be zero for some indicators (e.g., number of youth in FosterEd)