Foster Care Success Act Annual Evaluation Report

Reporting Period: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022
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Submitted to:
Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado House Education Committee
Colorado Senate Education Committee

This report was prepared in accordance with section Foster Care Success Act, H.B.22-1374, by the following staff from the Colorado Department of Education's Office of Student Support:

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Executive Summary

The Foster Care Success Act, authorized by H.B. 22-1374, provides funds to both the Department of Human Services (CDHS) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to improve the educational attainment of students in out-of-home placement. (Note: out-of-home placement is defined in the introduction section below.) The bill also requires CDE to identify specific goals for its foster care education initiative to achieve this aim, as well as to report to the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado General Assembly, and the public on annual improvement in the educational attainment of youth in foster care.

Per the legislation, in section 22-32-138, C.R.S., at a minimum, this report must contain the following data for each of the preceding three school years for students in out-of-home placement and enrolled in a public school:

- The number of students in out-of-home placement and number of students in the general state student population;
- The total number and proportion of students in out-of-home placement compared to the general student population who were enrolled in one school, two schools, three schools, or more than three schools during each school year;
- The rates of attendance and habitual truancy, as defined in section 22-33-102 (3.5), C.R.S., for students in out-of-home placement compared to the general student population;
- The dropout rates of students in out-of-home placement compared to the general state student population by individual grade level for grades seven through twelve;
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who re-enrolled in school after dropping out compared to the general state student population;
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduated or completed high school in four years compared to the general state student population; and
- The number and percentage of students in out-of-home placement who took more than four years to graduate or complete high school compared to the general state student population.

This report will serve as a baseline for comparison in future years. Baseline data for the goals outlined in H.B. 22-1374 are provided in the sections below. Annual improvement goals required by the legislation will be developed by the start of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2023, and will be reported in the legislative report submitted by February 1, 2024. CDE hired a Doctor of Evaluation to assess the current data available and work with program staff on setting measurements for these goals, which will include improvement in the following:

- The number and percentage of core content area classes that students in grades six through twelve in out-of-home placement complete during each school year;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who advance to the next grade level after each school year;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduate or complete high school;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who drop out of high school;
- The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who engage in postsecondary and workforce readiness pathways, as described in section 22-11-204 (4), C.R.S.; and
- Process improvements for assuring mandated training of Colorado Child Welfare Education Liaisons and Colorado County Caseworkers to assist in identifying and ensuring the educational rights and legal requirements of children and youth in out-of-home placement, as specified in the federal "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008", P.L. 110-351, as amended; the federal "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965" (ESEA), 20 U.S.C. sec. 6301 et seq., as amended; and Colorado H.B. 22-1374.

Introduction

CDE's Foster Care Education Initiative:

The Foster Care Education Initiative at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) supports students in out-of-home placement. A "student in foster care" is synonymous with a "student in an out-of-home placement" which is defined in H.B. 18-1306 as a student who at any time during an academic term is in foster care and receiving educational services through a state-licensed day treatment facility; who is otherwise in placement out of the home as that term is defined in section 19-1-103 (85), C.R.S.; or who is in placement outside of the home as a result of an adjudication pursuant to Article 2 of Title 19, C.R.S. It includes a child or youth who transfers enrollment as a result of being returned to his or her home at the conclusion of out-of-home placement.

CDE works with Colorado public school districts to ensure federal and state educational rights of students in out-of-home placement are met. Students in out-of-home placement have the right to remain in their school of origin when they are initially placed in foster care or move foster care placements. Additionally, these students have the right to immediate enrollment if moving schools is determined to be in their best interest as well as free meals and school fee waivers. CDE ensures that each school district in Colorado has a designated Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL). This person serves as the single point of contact to help facilitate school stability and seamless transfers for students in an out-of-home placement. The CWEL also coordinates with county child welfare agencies in providing, arranging, and funding transportation to the school of origin or facilitating school transfers. More information on CDE's Foster Care Education Initiative can be found at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/studentsupport/fostercare_index.

Key to this work is supporting the school stability of students in out-of-home placement. Overall, students who experience or are at risk of experiencing multiple school moves during their K-12 education outside of regular grade promotion are at-risk for not reaching their educational potential. This includes, and is not limited to, youth in foster care and is linked to several negative consequences such as stress, lower test scores, four to six months of education loss with each move, loss of credits/coursework, and loss of peer groups and relationships with trusted adults.[1:5] Colorado data trends show that foster students continue to experience lower graduation rates and completion rates as well as higher dropout rates compared to their peers. Given this, identification of and provision of support to students in foster care has become an important priority for state government. Moreover, the state agencies concerned with human services and education are working to improve internal processes surrounding these students to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed.

The Foster Care Success Act

In 2022, the Colorado General Assembly passed H.B. 22-1734, The Foster Care Success Act. The purpose of this law is to improve identification and outcomes of students in foster care through improved tracking and process improvements at the state level. Outcomes to be examined each year include identification of students in out-of-home placement enrolled in Colorado schools and student success and educational attainment. Process improvements outlined by the law include strengthening local service delivery to support educational attainment. On an annual basis CDE will provide local education agency personnel and child welfare education liaisons with professional development opportunities that will include training for new child welfare education liaisons that will be renewed once every two years after the initial training.

Reporting Requirements

The authorizing legislation requires reporting of the outcomes outlined above to the State Board of Education and the Colorado Legislature by February 1st of each year. This report is intended to meet the statutory reporting requirements outlined in H.B. 22-1372 through the analysis of state and student-level information

annually submitted to CDE and the Colorado Department of Human Services by schools, districts and county offices.

Identification and Baseline Data for Students in Out-of-Home Placement (2018-2019 through 2021-2022)

Students Identified

Over the course of the past four years, an average of 1,100 students in out-of-home placement have been identified each year as eligible for educational services in Colorado. The rate of identification has varied from year to year, peaking in the 2019-2020 school year, with 2,057 students identified. Fewer students were identified as being in out-of-home placement in the most recent year, 2021-2022, than any other year examined. *See **Table 1** for the numbers of students in the state student population and the number identified as being in out-of-home placement.*

AN AVERAGE OF

1,100

STUDENTS IDENTIFIED
EACH YEAR

Table 1: State Student Population and Students Identified as Being in Out-of-Home Placement

	State Student Population	Identified as Out-of-Home Placement
2018-2019	911,536	730
2019-2020	913,223	2,057
2020-2021	883,199	944
2021-2022	886,517	709

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Course Completion

In the 2021-2022 school year, foster students took a total of 12,545 Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies courses. Of these courses, 8,237 courses were passed or completed with no credit, a 65.66% completion rate. Historical data is not available as the collection of this data started in fiscal year 2021-2022. The current report will serve as a baseline for comparison in future years.

Successful Grade-Level Transitions

The authorizing legislation requires the annual reporting of increases in successful grade-level transitions for foster care students, as well as the state student population of students. Across the years, students in out-of-home placement continue to lag behind their peers in successful grade-level transitions, with a transition rate that is an average of 2.7 percentage points lower than the state rate. *See **Chart 1** for the percentage of students in Colorado and in out-of-home placement who advanced to the next grade level in the past four years.*

Chart 1: Percentage of Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement Advancing to the Next Grade Level
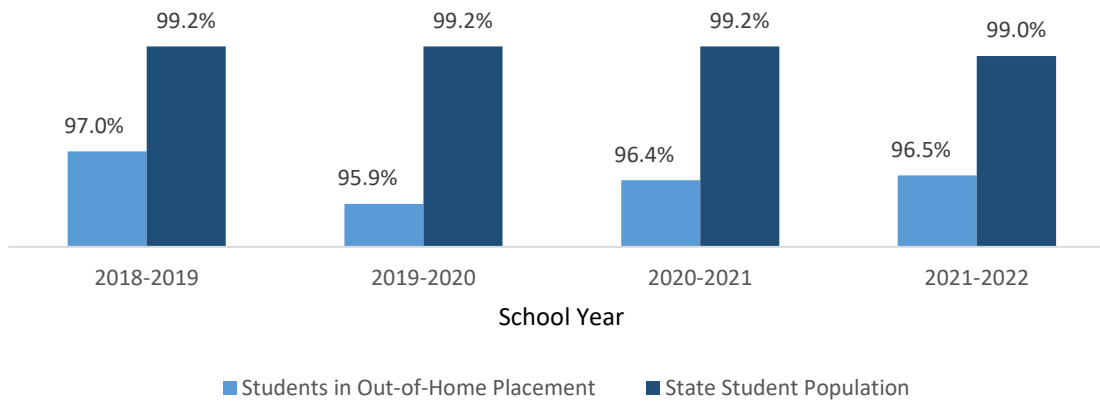
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

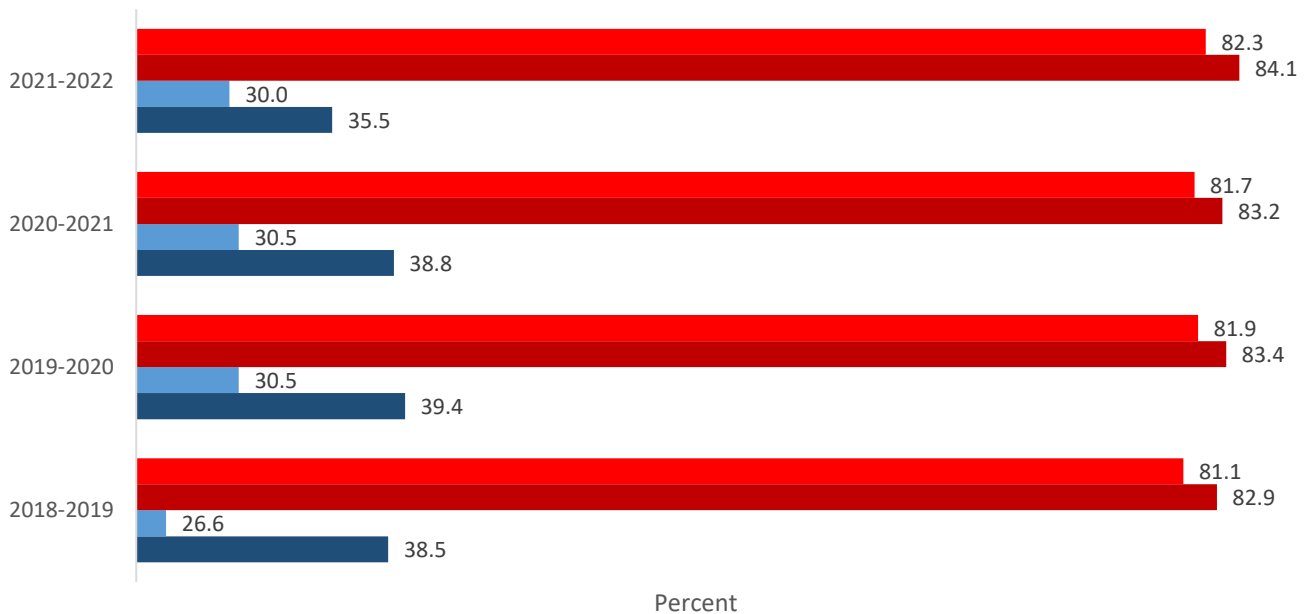## Four-Year and Extended Graduation and Completion Rates

Graduation and completion rates for foster students have historically been much lower than these rates for the state student population in Colorado. Despite this, graduation rates for students in foster care have steadily risen over the past four years. Although completion rates in the 2021-2022 school year fell by a small percentage from the 2010-2021 school year, it is evident that many students in foster care take advantage of alternatives to graduation to complete their education. *See **Table 2** for the number of graduates and completers in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement and **Chart 2** for the four-year graduation and completion rates of the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the past four years.*

Table 2: Graduates and Completers Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

	State Student Population		Students in Out-of-Home Placement	
	Graduates	**Completers**	**Graduates**	**Completers**
2018-2019	54,239	55,429	244	353
2019-2020	55,220	56,251	273	352
2020-2021	55,842	56,862	224	285
2021-2022	56,284	57,456	180	213

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 2: Four-Year Graduation and Completion Rates for the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

2021-2022
- 82.3
- 84.1
- 30.0
- 35.5

2020-2021
- 81.7
- 83.2
- 30.5
- 38.8

2019-2020
- 81.9
- 83.4
- 30.5
- 39.4

2018-2019
- 81.1
- 82.9
- 26.6
- 38.5

Percent

■ State Student Population Graduation Rates   ■ State Student Population Completion Rates

■ Students in Out-of-Home Placement Graduation Rates ■ Students in Out-of-Home Placement Completion Rates

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Moreover, when given more time, many students in foster continue their educations, graduating or completing in 5, 6, or 7 years. Again, despite lagging behind the state student population, these rates show that students in foster care utilize the extra years needed to complete their educations at a higher rate than the state student population in Colorado. *See **Table 3** for extended-year graduation and completion rates for the state student population and students in out-of-home placement. See **Chart 3** and **Table 4** for the number and percentage of students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement graduating or completing their educations in more than four years.*

Table 3: Extended-Year Graduation and Completion Rates for the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

| Class | 4-Year Rate | | 5-Year Rate | | 6-Year Rate | | 7-Year Rate | |
of	Graduation	Completion	Graduation	Completion	Graduation	Completion	Graduation	Completion
State Student Population								
2019	81.1	82.9	85.1	87.3	86.6	89.0	87.2	89.7
2020	81.9	83.4	86.0	88.0	87.1	89.3	*Available 2022-2023*	

2021	81.7	83.2	85.7	87.7	*Available 2022-2023*	*Available 2023-2024*
2022	82.3	84.1	*Available 2022-2023*	*Available 2023-2024*	*Available 2024-2025*
			Students in Out-of-Home Placement		
2019	26.6	38.5	33.4	47.3	35.9
2020	30.5	39.4	36.7	46.7	39.4
2021	30.5	38.8	36.5	45.6	*Available 2022-2023*
2022	30.0	35.5	*Available 2022-2023*	*Available 2023-2024*	*Available 2024-2025*

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Table 4: Graduates and Completers Taking More Than Four Years Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

	State Student Population		Students in Out-of-Home Placement	
	Graduates	**Completers**	**Graduates**	**Completers**
2018-2019	3882	4382	98	140
2019-2020	3322	3761	80	95
2020-2021	2548	2879	46	52

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 3: Percentage of Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement Graduating and Completing in More Than Four Years
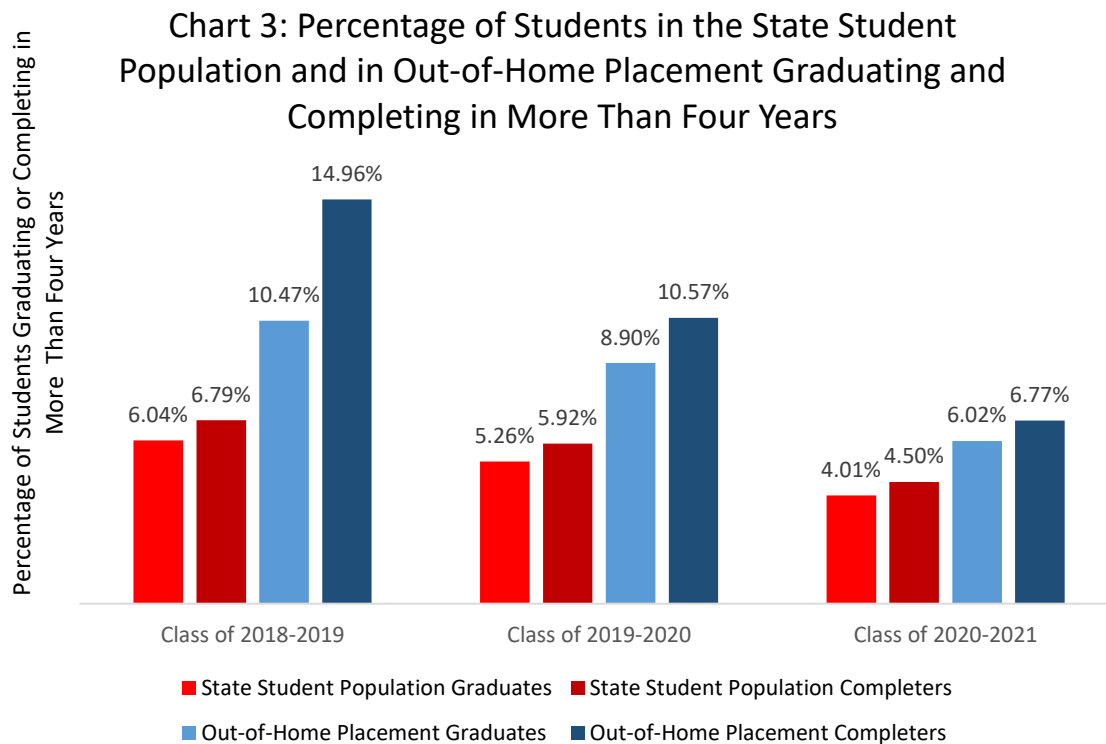
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting. Graduates and completers from the Class of 2018-2019 include students who graduated or completed in 5, 6, and 7 years. Graduates and completers from the Class of 2019-2020 include students who graduated or

completed in 5 and 6 years. Graduates and completers from the Class of 2020-2021 include students who graduated or completed in 5 years.

Student Mobility

Students in out-of-home placement are more likely to change schools throughout the year, putting them at increased risk for disengagement. Across the last four years in Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have much higher mobility rates than the state student population, although the number of students in out-of-home placement staying in one school has steadily increased since 2018-2019. *Chart 4 shows the percentages (and Table 3 shows the numbers) of students attending single and multiple schools in Colorado and in out-of-home placement across the last four years.*

Chart 4: Percentages of Students Attending Single and Multiple Schools: Rates for the State Student Population and for Students in Out-of-Home-Placement
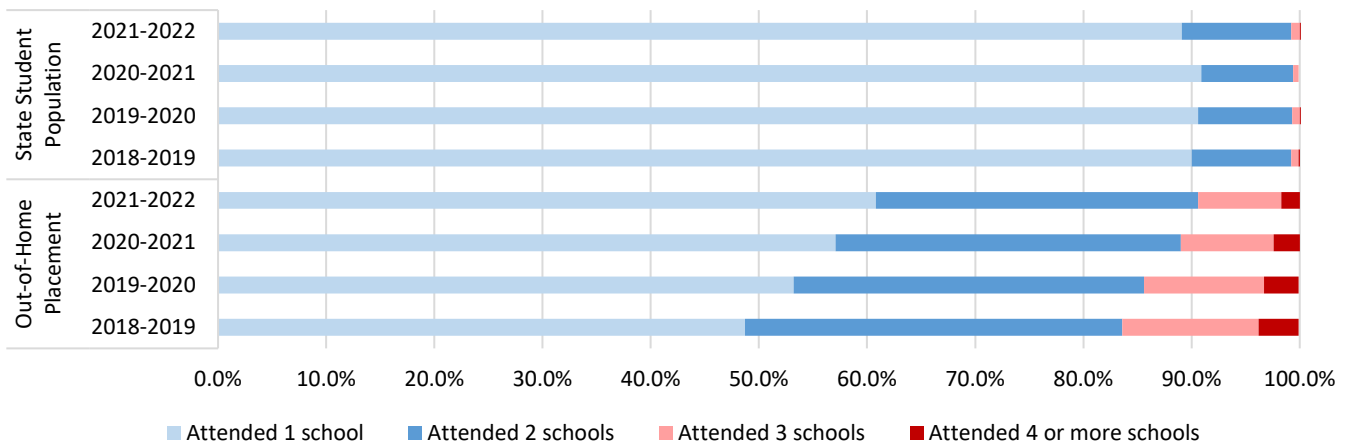
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Table 5: Number of Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement Attending Single and Multiple Schools in 2021-2022

| School Year	Attendance base	Attend 1 school	Attend 2 schools	Attend 3 schools	Attend 4+ schools
State Student Population					
2018-2019	966,252	869,512	88,767	7,196	777
2019-2020	961,468	870,692	83,784	6,419	573
2020-2021	947,205	861,402	80,448	4,980	375
2021-2022	944,160	840,959	95,109	7,463	629
Students in Out-of-Home Placement					
2018-2019	3,754	1,828	1,312	474	140
2019-2020	3,202	1,704	1,039	355	104
2020-2021	2,965	1,694	947	254	70
2021-2022	3,738	2,273	1,114	289	62

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Attendance

In Colorado, students in out-of-home placement have lower attendance and higher truancy rates than their peers in the state student population. ***Charts 5 and 6*** *show the attendance and truancy rates for students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the last four years.*

Chart 5: Attendance Rates for Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement

■ State Student Population   ■ Students in Out-of-Home Placement
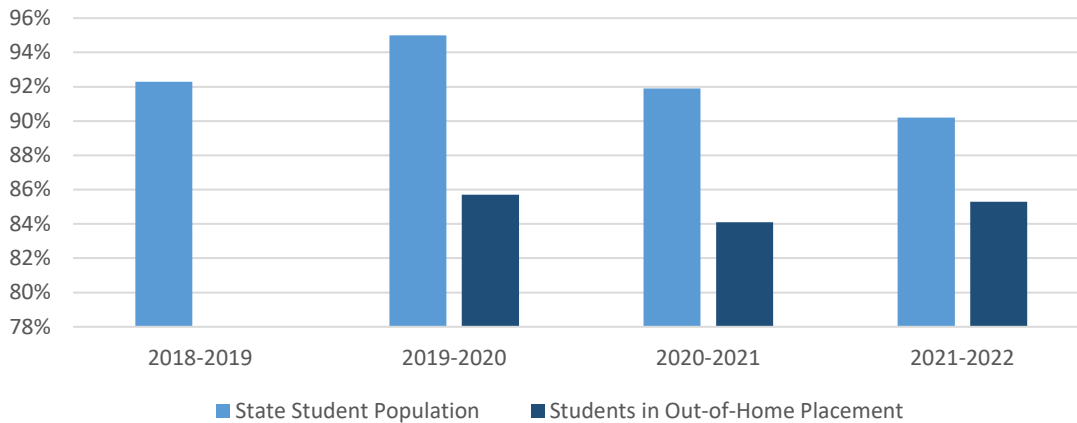
Note: Attendance data were not available for students in out-of-home placement in 2018-2019. Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 6: Truancy Rates for Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement

■ State Student Population   ■ Students in Out-of-Home Placement
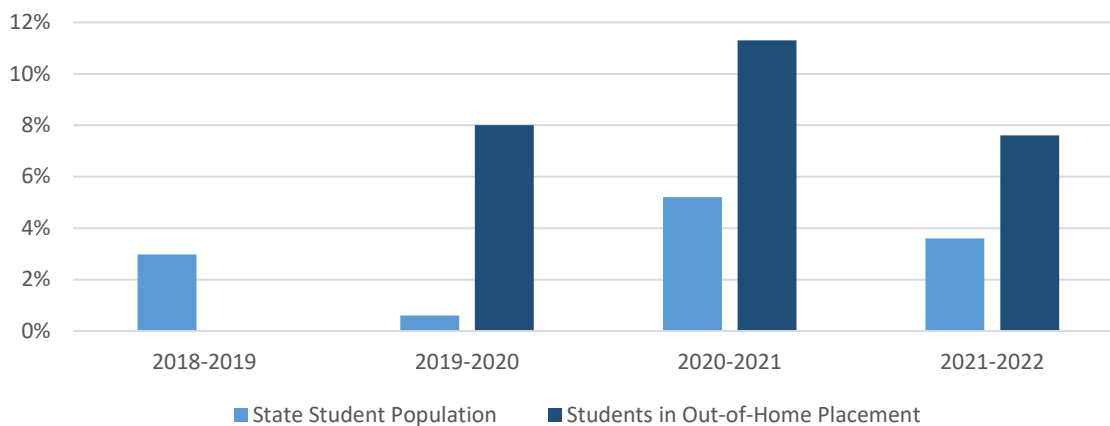
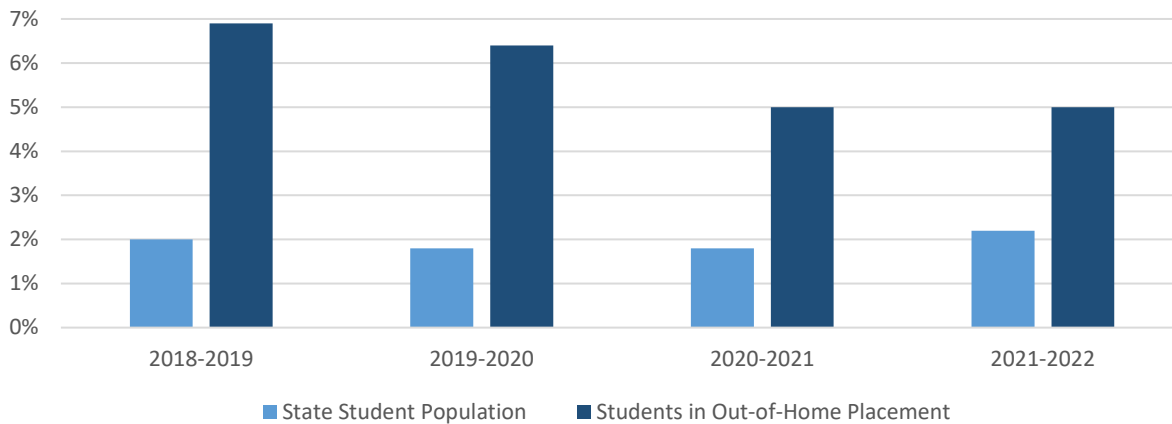***Note***: Truancy data were not available for students in out-of-home placement in 2018-2019. Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.
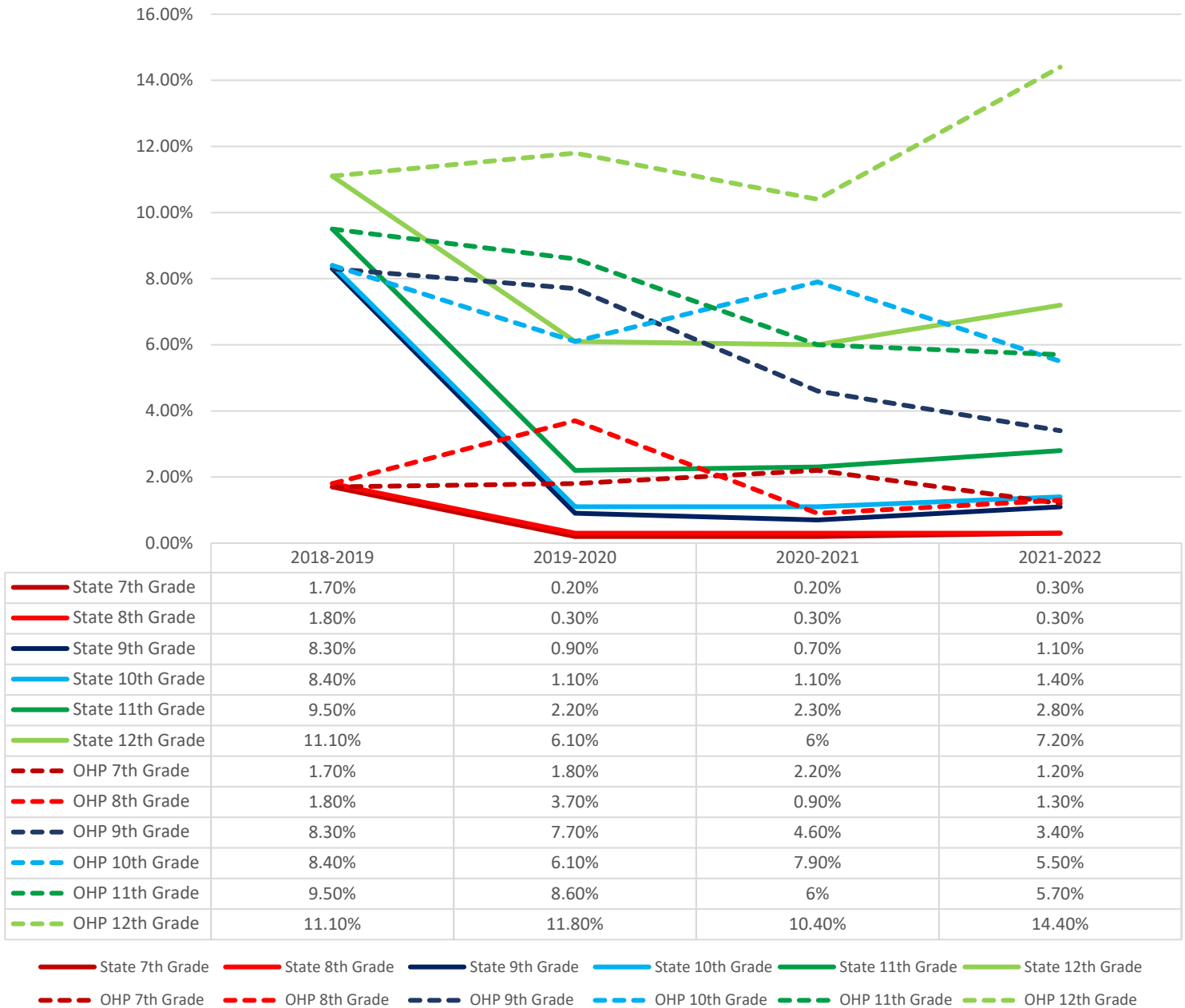
Dropout Prevention

In Colorado, students in out-of-home placement show higher dropout rates than their peers in the state student population. ***Chart 7*** *shows the dropout rates for students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement over the last four years.* ***Chart 8*** *shows the dropout rates for students in the state student population and in out-of-home placement broken down by grade over the last four years.*

Chart 7: Dropout Rates for Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement

■ State Student Population   ■ Students in Out-of-Home Placement

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 8: Dropout Rates by Grade for the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
State 7th Grade	1.70%	0.20%	0.20%	0.30%
State 8th Grade	1.80%	0.30%	0.30%	0.30%
State 9th Grade	8.30%	0.90%	0.70%	1.10%
State 10th Grade	8.40%	1.10%	1.10%	1.40%
State 11th Grade	9.50%	2.20%	2.30%	2.80%
State 12th Grade	11.10%	6.10%	6%	7.20%
OHP 7th Grade	1.70%	1.80%	2.20%	1.20%
OHP 8th Grade	1.80%	3.70%	0.90%	1.30%
OHP 9th Grade	8.30%	7.70%	4.60%	3.40%
OHP 10th Grade	8.40%	6.10%	7.90%	5.50%
OHP 11th Grade	9.50%	8.60%	6%	5.70%
OHP 12th Grade	11.10%	11.80%	10.40%	14.40%

Note: State = state student population; OHP = students in out-of-home placement. Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Engagement and Re-engagement

Two essential keys to ensuring positive educational outcomes for all of Colorado's students in out-of-home placement are engaging students in the educational process and re-engaging students who have left.

One way to engage students and keep them on track for graduation is through offering postsecondary workforce readiness pathways (e.g., personalized pathways through high school and on to college or a career, including exploration of non-traditional ways students can enter into postsecondary education, such as certificate programs, apprenticeships and other work-based learning experiences, 2- and 4-year degrees, military, and career training). CDE does not track the number of students engaging in these pathways specifically, but historically, the number of students in out-of-home placement going on to postsecondary is small. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage was increasing, with 1.7 percent of all students in out-of-home placement going on to postsecondary in 2018-2019 and 1.9 percent going on in 2019-2020. That number dropped to 0.8 percent in 2020-2021, the year of online and hybrid learning. The number and percentage of students in foster care going on to postsecondary is not currently available for the 2021-2022 school year.

Re-engagement refers to re-enrolling students who have previously dropped out. While this is relatively rare in the state student population (0.1 percent in all years examined), it is somewhat more common among students in out-of-home placement and should remain a top priority for the department. *See **Table 6** for the number (and **Chart** 9 for the percentage) of students in the state student population and students in out-of-home placement who re-engaged after dropping out over the last four years.*

Table 6: Graduates and Completers Taking More Than Four Years Among the State Student Population and Students in Out-of-Home Placement

	State Student Population	Students in Out-of-Home Placement
2018-2019	147	4
2019-2020	142	5
2020-2021	98	6
2021-2022	158	10

Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

Chart 9: Percentage of Students in the State Student Population and in Out-of-Home Placement who Re-engaged After Dropping Out the Year Prior
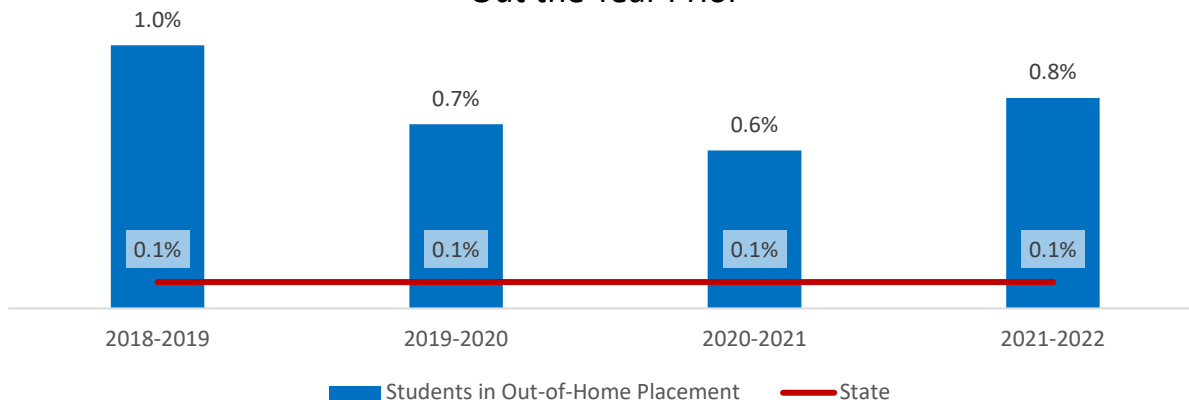
Note: Data obtained in collaboration with the Department of Human Services from school and district reporting.

ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT GOALS

Baseline data for the goals outlined in H.B. 22-1374 are provided in this report. Annual improvement goals required per H.B. 22-1374 will be developed by the start of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2023, and will be reported in the legislative report submitted by February 1, 2024. CDE's Offices of Student Support and Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement hired a Doctor of Evaluation to assess the current data available and work with program staff on setting measurements for these goals, which will include improvement in the following:

1) The number and percentage of core content area classes that students in grades six through twelve in out-of-home placement complete during each school year;
2) The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who advance to the next grade level after each school year;
3) The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who graduate or complete high school;
4) The percentage of students in out-of-home placement who engage in postsecondary and workforce readiness pathways, as described in section 22-11-204 (4); and
5) Process improvements for assuring mandated training of Colorado Child Welfare Education Liaisons and Colorado County Caseworkers to assist in identifying and ensuring the educational rights and legal requirements of children and youth in foster care, as specified in the federal "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008", P.L. 110-351, as amended; the federal "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965" (ESEA), 20 U.S.C. sec. 6301 et seq., as amended; and Colorado H.B. 22-1374.

CONCLUSION

Colorado data trends show that students in out-of-home placement continue to experience lower attendance rates, lower graduation rates and completion rates, as well as higher dropout rates compared to their peers. Further, students in out-of-home placement are more likely to change schools throughout the year, putting them at increased risk for disengagement. Given this, identification of and provision of support to students in out-of-home placement has become an important priority for state government. Moreover, the state agencies concerned with human services and education are working to improve internal processes and improvement goals regarding these students to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed.

The Foster Care Success Act, H.B. 22-1374, serves as the state's investment in the improvement of identification and outcomes in students in foster care. The Foster Care Success act aims to improve identification and outcomes for students in foster care by improved tracking of both identification and outcomes along with process improvement goals at the state level. This report serves as a baseline for comparison in future years. Baseline data for the goals outlined in H.B. 22-1374 are provided in the sections above. Annual improvement goals required by the legislation will be developed by the start of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2023, and will be reported in the legislative report submitted by February 1, 2024. CDE's Offices of Student Support and Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement hired a Doctor of Evaluation to assess the current data available and work with program staff on setting measurements for these goals.

Endnotes

[1] Clemens, E. V., Klopfenstein, K., Lalonde, T. L., & Tis, M. (2018). The effects of placement and school stability on academic growth trajectories of students in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *87*, 86-94.

[2] Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T. L., & Sheesley, A. P. (2016). The relationship between school mobility and students in foster care earning a high school credential. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *68*, 193-201.

[3] Free, J. L., Križ, K., & Konecnik, J. (2014). Harvesting hardships: Educators' views on the challenges of migrant students and their consequences on education. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *47*, 187-197.

[4] Gasper, J., DeLuca, S., & Estacion, A. (2012). Switching schools: Revisiting the relationship between school mobility and high school dropout. *American Educational Research Journal*, *49*(3), 487-519. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4279956/pdf/nihms622720.pdf

[5] Grim, J. T. (2019). *High School Student Mobility, Achievement, and Graduation*. Retrieved from https://media.proquest.com/media/pq/classic/doc/4327436933/fmt/ai/rep/NPDF?_s=y%2BkmV0cMCoHMstyQviUBjjRyaHE%3D