



Report 2

Arizona's Students in Foster Care Supported by FosterEd

School Years 2018–2019 and 2020–2021

Prepared for FosterEd Arizona, a Compassionate Education Systems
Initiative of the National Center for Youth Law

RTI International

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report uses data from multiple sources to describe educational experiences of Arizona's students in foster care served by FosterEd Arizona in the school year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2018–2019) and during the second school year impacted by the pandemic (2020–2021). FosterEd works to ensure that students in foster care have (a) effective and committed education champions, (b) well-coordinated Education Teams, and (c) student-centered education engagement and plans. The Education Team, coordinated by a FosterEd Education Liaison, supports educational needs and goals through student-centered engagement.

Using data shared by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), the report documents that **students served by FosterEd during the pandemic experienced especially high educational support needs, both compared with those served by FosterEd in the year prior to the pandemic and compared with all students in foster care.** For example, 48% of students served by FosterEd during 2020–2021 had a disability, compared with 38% served in 2018–2019. Among all students in foster care, 26% had a disability in each of the focal years.

The ADE educational indicator data also highlight that students served by FosterEd faced **especially challenging educational experiences during the second school year impacted by the pandemic.** During the 2020–2021 school year, elementary and middle school students served by FosterEd experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism compared with students served by FosterEd during the 2018–2019 school year. High school students served by FosterEd were more likely to stop out of school during the second year of the pandemic compared with their counterparts during the year prior to the pandemic. Students served by FosterEd who were in grade 12 during the second year of the pandemic were less likely to graduate during that school year compared with students served by FosterEd who were in grade 12 during the 2018–2019 school year. However, we also considered the proportion of students in grade 12 who did not graduate in the focal year but who were still enrolled at the end of that school year and whose school indicated that they would be enrolled for an additional year of high school to complete their diploma. When we consider both single-year outcomes combined (graduation or continuing enrollment), a larger percentage of grade 12 students supported by FosterEd experienced one of these positive experiences in 2020–2021 compared with 2018–2019. This report notes the limitations of focusing on single-year “snapshots” for educational indicators, including because some students in foster care may need more time to complete high school given the disruptions in their home lives and the impacts of trauma. Additionally, since students in foster care move schools more often than students not in care, this increases the chances that their educational records are lost or incomplete. This possibility of lost or incomplete educational records may have been heightened during the pandemic as school systems were stressed with unprecedented challenges and disruptions.

The report also presents results from a survey of 94 adults connected to students served by FosterEd, referred to as adult team members. The adults were surveyed in May and June of 2022, were connected to students who had been served during the 2020–2021 school year, and were diverse in terms of their relationship to students served by FosterEd (e.g., parents, relatives and other care givers; teachers and other school and district staff; Arizona Department of Child Safety Specialists). **Most adult team members expressed positive reactions and feedback regarding FosterEd Arizona.** Between 71% and 90% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to six positive statements about their own experiences with FosterEd Arizona as an adult team member. Statements receiving the highest level of agreement include “Working with the FosterEd team has helped me to better support the student's education,” “Working with the FosterEd team has helped me better partner with other adults in the student's life to support the student's education,” and “The FosterEd program has treated me with respect.”

Adult team members reported students’ benefiting from participating in FosterEd across a number of dimensions. Of the seven youth impact dimensions they were asked about, adults perceived the most gains on students’ attitude towards school, self-confidence, and relationships with their teachers. In open-ended responses, adult team members cited students’ increased self-advocacy, self-awareness, school engagement, and academic self-efficacy since working with FosterEd.

Adult team members surveyed offered three general recommendations to improve the FosterEd Arizona program: (a) expand services to more students and expand the depth of those services (e.g., create more linkages with postsecondary institutions), (b) collaborate even more with the other adults in students’ lives, and (c) increase awareness about the program. Based on the totality of data presented in this report and findings from other recent FosterEd reports (e.g., Laird & Venkateswaran, 2021; Laird & Warkentien, 2020) RTI International agrees that FosterEd Arizona provides important supports to students, that the need among students in foster care is great, and that the three areas for growth noted in the adult team members surveys are worthy of support. As FosterEd considers this feedback, we recommend it do so with partners from the Arizona Department of Education and local districts and schools, partners from the Arizona Department of Child Safety, and recent alumni from foster care, and to do so with explicit consideration of whether additional resources are available to support expansion and deepening of services. If not, we encourage partners to carefully consider changes that would be cost neutral and reasonable given staff time and to plan to examine periodically together whether those changes are in fact bringing about intended benefits.

1. Introduction

This report provides a snapshot of the educational experiences of Arizona’s youth in foster care served by FosterEd Arizona. It presents information from 2018–2019, the school year prior to the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and from 2020–2021, the most recent school year for which data were available as of the writing of this report and the second school year impacted by the pandemic. It is intended to accompany the report *Arizona’s Students in Foster Care: School Years 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 (Report 1)* (Laird et al., 2022), which describes

students’ experience during these two focal school years for all of Arizona’s students in foster care using quantitative data available from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). This current report also summarizes results from a survey conducted in May and June 2022 of adults involved in the lives of students in foster care supported by FosterEd. Together, these two sets of data describe the continuing need for better educational support for youth in foster care and promising practices of FosterEd Arizona to organize adults in their lives to provide that support.



KEY POINT

In this report, multiple data sources are used to describe the educational experiences of Arizona’s youth in foster care served by FosterEd in the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and during the second school year impacted by the pandemic. The results provide meaningful insights into areas for ongoing support for students and considerations for FosterEd to help fulfill promises to meet individualized needs via Education Liaisons and tiered support.

About FosterEd: a Compassionate Education Systems Initiative

FosterEd is a Compassionate Education Systems Initiative of the National Center for Youth Law working to ensure that students in foster care have (a) effective and committed education champions, (b) well-coordinated Education Teams, and (c) student-centered education engagement and plans. The Education Team, coordinated by a FosterEd Education Liaison, supports educational needs and goals through student-centered engagement. FosterEd recognizes that needs are individualized; all youth may not require the same involvement. Education Liaisons provide three tiers of support: intensive, responsive, and universal. Whereas intensive Education Liaisons focus on supporting high school students, responsive Education Liaisons serve students in kindergarten through grade 12, often by collaborating with the adults in students’ lives rather than directly interacting with students.

Youth with needs that can be addressed in a short period are served by Education Liaisons responsively for a period of 1 to 6 months. For high-school-age youth with complex educational needs, Education Liaisons provide intensive services throughout high school and into college to ensure those young people are on a pathway toward high school graduation and well positioned to pursue their post-high school goals. In the intensive tier, Education Liaisons work directly with youth and the adults in their lives to help these youth develop and achieve educational goals.

FosterEd's universal tier of service aims to support successful implementation of system-level policies and practices ensuring youth access academic and social-emotional interventions intended for all youth. This is accomplished by providing training to education and child welfare agency partners, being available to consult with agency partners about specific issues for youth in foster care without formally embarking on a responsive or intensive case plan, and developing and disseminating a Foster Youth Education [Toolkit](#) including resources and recommended practices for supporting the education of youth in foster care (National Century for Youth Law, 2020).

Support during the pandemic. FosterEd aims to develop the resilience of youth in foster care to adapt to various challenges they face in their personal and educational spheres. The pandemic brought on unexpected challenges in the education system that impacted all students, including youth in foster care. The experiences of students served by FosterEd Arizona during the first year of the pandemic were highlighted in a report released in August 2021 ([Laird & Venkateswaran, 2021](#)). The report summarized interviews RTI International conducted from November 2020 to January 2021 with 10 young people in foster care and supported by FosterEd, 5 Education Liaisons, and 14 other adults in the lives of these young people (i.e., adult Education Team members). Through those interviews we learned the following:

- Similar to students across the country, youth in foster care experienced heightened educational needs during the pandemic because of disrupted structures, challenges with online learning, and increased stress levels.
- Students had inconsistent supports for online learning. Some group home settings were challenging for remote learning, while others established helpful structures and routines for their young people.
- Students varied in their interest and access to in-school learning. Some students wanted to return to in-school learning, others preferred to continue with online learning, and still others changed their minds over time.

In those interviews, students served by FosterEd and the adults in their lives described important supports Education Liaisons provided during the pandemic:

- FosterEd Education Liaisons helped students set and pursue their educational goals, including graduating from high school and starting college. Students reported that their Education Liaisons kept them on track and helped them manage application processes for jobs or college. More than that, they acted as encouragers, keeping students motivated as they moved through the steps towards their goal.
 - FosterEd Education Liaisons built students' capacity to advocate for themselves, such as in communicating with teachers. Other adults working with FosterEd noted that Education Liaisons work with students in ways that build students' capacity and confidence.
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- FosterEd Education Liaisons were able to build strong rapport with youth, were accessible and dependable, were extremely knowledgeable about students' educational rights and special education laws, took creative approaches to meeting student needs, and were proactive, empathic, and passionate advocates for youth in foster care.

Focus of This Report

Section 2 of this report presents the same educational indicators reported in *Arizona's Students in Foster Care: School Years 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 (Report 1)* (Laird et al., 2022) but for the subset of those students who were supported by FosterEd Arizona. As will be explained in greater detail in Section 2, simple comparisons of data for all students in foster care and those served by FosterEd are not always appropriate, since by design FosterEd serves more students in foster care who have heightened educational needs. Nevertheless, understanding how students served by FosterEd experience education as evidenced by annual educational indicators commonly reported by districts and states, including ADE, helps elucidate their educational journeys and shines a light on the continuing educational challenges many of these students face. Section 3 presents results from a survey of adults in these students' lives (e.g., caregivers, teachers, social workers) which describes the adults' perspectives of whether and how these students benefited from FosterEd and how FosterEd could improve to better meet the needs of these students and other Arizona students in foster care.

2. Selected Educational Indicators

In this section we present information about students in foster care who were served by FosterEd Arizona during the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years. The data summarized here were shared by ADE after we established a data sharing agreement that specified how we would protect and appropriately analyze students’ records. We begin by presenting demographic characteristics of students served by FosterEd Arizona, then report information about the schools they attended and, finally, information about their educational experiences during the two focal years.

The indicators shown in this section are consistent with those shown in the accompanying report, *Arizona’s Students in Foster Care: School Years 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 (Report 1)* (Laird et al., 2022), which is intended to serve as an update to a report about Arizona’s students in foster care during the 2012–2013 school year written by Barrat et al. (2015). It is important to note that these reports each present single-year snapshots. This analysis approach presents limitations. For example, when we report the percentage of students in grade 12 who graduated that school year, we do not have the ability to also indicate how many students who did not graduate that school year did in fact graduate the next year. Some students, particularly those in foster care, may need more time to complete high school given disruptions in their home lives and impacts of trauma. We address the limitations of this single-year snapshot approach in greater detail when we report educational experience data later in this section and in Appendix A.

Comparing Students Served by FosterEd and All Students in Foster Care is Not Appropriate

Table 1 reports demographic characteristics of all students in foster care and the subset of students who were served by FosterEd, for each of the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years. Boldface blue text is used to call attention to where the groups differ by at least 3 percentage points during that focal school year. During both focal school years, FosterEd Arizona served a higher proportion of males, and a lower proportion of females, compared with the full population of students in foster



Key Findings

Comparisons between all students in foster care and those served by FosterEd during 2018–2019 and 2020–2021, by demographic characteristics, revealed numerous differences, thereby indicating that simple direct comparisons of their educational experience are not always appropriate.

The pandemic affected FosterEd’s scope of support for Arizona’s youth in foster care given heightened needs of students it was already serving and among additional students it started serving during the pandemic, while also experiencing a reduction in the number of referrals for FosterEd services and a reduction in FosterEd staff.

Notable differences in educational experiences were identified between students served by FosterEd during the focal school years, highlighting the especially intense educational needs of these students during and coming out of the pandemic.

care. The racial/ethnic composition of all students in foster care and the subset who was served by FosterEd were similar in 2018–2019, but in 2020–2021 FosterEd served a higher proportion of both African American and White students and a lower proportion of Hispanic students compared with the full population of students in foster care. In 2018–2019 FosterEd served a higher proportion of students identified as English Learners compared with the full population of students in foster care that year, but in 2020–2021 the differential was less than 3 percentage points.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of All Students in Foster Care and Students in Foster Care Served by FosterEd Arizona, 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 School Years

Demographic Characteristic	2018–2019		2020–2021	
	All Students in Foster Care (N = 10,294)	Students Served by FosterEd (N = 442)	All Students in Foster Care (N = 10,422)	Students Served by FosterEd (N = 287)
Gender				
Female	47%	44%	49%	42%
Male	53%	56%	51%	58%
Race and ethnicity				
Hispanic	47%	49%	45%	41%
White	29%	29%	32%	37%
African American	10%	10%	13%	16%
Native American	4%	3%	5%	*
Asian	<2%	*	<2%	*
Pacific Islander	<2%	*	<2%	*
Multiple races	9%	9%	4%	*
English Learners	5%	8%	5%	7%
Students with disabilities	26%	38%	26%	48%
School level				
Elementary school	45%	27%	47%	28%
Middle school	23%	20%	23%	22%
High school	32%	52%	30%	50%

* Information is suppressed because the count of students is less than 11.

Note: Boldface blue text indicates that the difference between all students in foster care and those served by FosterEd is at least 3 percentage points.

Source: Analysis file constructed by RTI based on data shared by FosterEd Arizona and the Arizona Department of Education.

Of the characteristics shown in Table 1, students served by FosterEd differed the most from all students in foster care on the dimensions of disability status and level of school (elementary, middle or high school). Students served by FosterEd were much more likely to have a disability than the full population of students in foster care. For example, during both the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years, 26% of students in foster care had a disability. However, among the subgroup of students served by FosterEd, 38% of students served during the 2018–2019 school year, and 48% of students served during the 2020–2021 school year, had a disability. In terms of level of school, most students served by FosterEd were in high school (52% in 2018–2019 and 50% in 2020–2021),

which represented a higher proportion compared with the full population of students in foster care (32% and 30% were in high school during the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years, respectively).

The fact that students served by FosterEd differ from the full population of students in foster care across a number of demographic characteristics means that more direct comparisons of the educational experiences of these two groups of students is always not appropriate. For example, students with disabilities often need additional supports and accommodations to access grade-level curriculum. Thus, the subsequent tables in this section focus exclusively on students served by FosterEd, providing snapshots of their educational experiences. It is important to note that information for all students in foster care for the same indicators presented in the rest of this section are available in the accompanying report *Arizona's Students in Foster Care: School Years 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 (Report 1)* (Laird et al., 2022).

In a report released in 2020, we reported on analyses conducted using methods more appropriate for examining the FosterEd program's effect on educational outcomes of participating students ([Laird & Warkentien, 2020](#)). Those impact analyses relied on a propensity-score-based method called inverse probability of treatment weighting. That method mimics the design of a randomized experiment using observational data by removing observed baseline differences between foster youth receiving FosterEd intensive services (the treatment group) and youth in foster care not receiving FosterEd services (the comparison group). The results shown in that report provide some evidence of FosterEd's impact on the youth it serves with intensive supports. More specifically we found the following: (a) Receiving intensive FosterEd services increases the amount of time students were in school. FosterEd participation led to an average of 13 fewer unenrolled days and an average of 5 fewer out-of-school days (either absent or unenrolled) during the 2018–2019 school year; and (b) Receiving FosterEd intensive services increases student English Language Arts achievement as measured by the AzMERIT assessment, Arizona's statewide achievement test. Relative to non-FosterEd youth in foster care, participation in FosterEd increased English Language Arts scale scores by 14 points, a statistically significant result.

Educational Experiences of Students Served by FosterEd, 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 School Years

Before turning to present information about the educational experience of students served by FosterEd during the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years, we note that FosterEd served fewer students during 2020–2021, the second year of the pandemic, compared with 2018–2019, the year before the pandemic. During the 2018–2019 school year, FosterEd served a total of 526 students, and during the 2020–2021 school year the program served 364 students. When we apply the age focus for these analyses (ages 5 to 17 at the start of the school year) and the ability to link those students with educational records provided by ADE, the numbers reduce to 442 students for the 2018–2019 school year and 287 for the 2020–2021 school year. Furthermore, Table 1 shows that

students served by FosterEd in 2018–2019 differed from students served during the 2020–2021 school year in a number of ways. Perhaps most notably, they were substantially more likely to have a disability (38% in 2018–2019 compared with 48% in 2020–2021).

FosterEd Arizona program staff have provided some context for why fewer students were served during the 2020–2021 school year compared with the year prior to the pandemic, 2018–2019. During the second year of the pandemic, there were fewer referrals for common issues and concerns regarding school mobility, school discipline, transportation, and placement change since most schools and youth were engaged in virtual learning. Schools tended to conduct fewer special education evaluations during the pandemic, which also resulted in a drop in referrals. Of the referrals received, most required more time and flexibility from FosterEd to properly address given difficulties locating specific students and coordinating with overburdened schools and districts. In the midst of heightened challenging experiences for students in foster care, FosterEd staff, like workers everywhere, faced extraordinary challenges in their own lives and a few left the organization to attend to those, resulting in a reduction of two Educational Liaisons on staff for much of the 2020–2021 school year.

Table 2 reports information about the schools attended by students served by FosterEd during the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years. Boldface blue text is used to call attention to results that differ by at least 3 percentage points between those two focal years. It is important to keep in mind that these are not the same group of students. In fact, only 13% of students served by FosterEd in 2020–2021, reflected in the last column in Table 2, were also served by FosterEd in 2018–2019, reflected in the middle column in Table 2. During 2020–2021, a school year impacted by the pandemic, students in foster care served by FosterEd appeared to experience more school stability than students in foster care served by the program in 2020–2021. Specifically, 49% of students served by FosterEd in 2020–2021 attended just one school, compared with 46% of students served by the program in 2018–2019. These findings could be attributed to schools' transition to virtual learning as it allowed students to remain at their schools despite experiencing a placement change.

Assigning letter grades to schools was suspended during the 2020–2021 school year because educational disruptions due to COVID-19 presented limitations with the data typically included in the calculation of A to F school grades. Thus, it is not possible to examine differences in this indicator for students served by FosterEd in 2018–2019 and those served in 2020–2021. Almost half (45%) of students in foster care served by FosterEd in 2018–2019 attended a school with a letter grade of C or below.

Table 2: Characteristics of Schools Attended by Students Served by FosterEd, 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 School Years

School Characteristics	2018–2019 Students Served by FosterEd (N = 442)	2020–2021 Students Served by FosterEd (N = 287)
Number of schools attended		
1	46%	49%
2	33%	32%
3	16%	14%
4+	6%	6%
School letter grade		
A	14%	—
B	34%	—
C	32%	—
D	9%	—
F	4%	—
Not rated	7%	—
Nontraditional school enrollment		
Elementary school students	*	*
Middle school students	*	*
High school students	19%	17%

— Data not available. Due to COVID-19 pandemic disruptions, the Arizona Department of Education did not calculate school letter grades for 2020–2021.

* Information is suppressed because the count of students is less than 11.

Note: Boldface blue text indicates differences of at least 3 percentage points between the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years for students in foster care served by FosterEd.

Source: Analysis file constructed by RTI based on data shared by FosterEd Arizona and the Arizona Department of Education.

Table 3 reports information about educational experiences of students served by FosterEd during the 2018–2019 and 2021 school years. The average number of calendar days that students served by FosterEd were enrolled in school (including weekends and school holidays during the school year) were similar for those served during the 2018–2019 school year and those served in the 2020–2021 school year: 248 and 247 days, respectively.¹ Among elementary and middle school students, the rates of chronic absenteeism (defined as being absent 18 or more days in the school year) were higher for FosterEd students served during the second year of the pandemic, compared with students served the year before the pandemic.² FosterEd staff noticed that absenteeism increased among students living in congregate care settings as COVID-19 exposure and positive cases required all youth in group homes to quarantine, sometimes resulting in being absent more than 30 days in a single school year. Participation in statewide assessments was lower among students served by FosterEd during the second year of the pandemic; representatives of FosterEd shared that

¹ If we roughly assume the school year is 42 weeks long (and summer is 10 weeks long), we could expect students to be enrolled for about 290 days.

² ADE only tracks and reports on chronic absenteeism for students in elementary and middle school, given the challenges of doing so for high school students whose schedules and attendance are based on class period rather than school day.

many of the youth they served were either unwilling or unable to complete statewide assessments during the pandemic as they required students to be physically taken into the schools despite virtual learning settings. Among those who did take assessments, the percentage who scored proficient or above was generally lower for both English Language Arts and mathematics than during the 2018-2019 school year.

The last two educational indicators shown in Table 3 are single-year stop-out rates for high school students (i.e., grades 9–12) and single-year graduation rates for students in grade 12. We use the term “stop out” rather than “drop out” to acknowledge that some students who leave high school one year will return to schooling in a subsequent year and complete their high school degree (Rosen et al., 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, six out of 10 high school students who stop out (defined as absent for more than 20 consecutive days for reasons other than illness, vacation, or injury), return to complete their education with a high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) certificate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Additionally, we specify that the grade 12 graduation rate we show covers only graduations that occurred during that single school year. Some students in foster care may need more time to complete high school given disruptions in their home lives and impacts of trauma. These single-year snapshots do not capture and report additional percentages of students who were in grade 12 in a focal year and did not graduate that year but went on to earn a high school diploma during a second year of grade 12. Thus, Table 3 very likely underreports the percentage of students served by FosterEd in 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 who have since graduated from high school. Nevertheless, it offers a comparison of the single-year stop-out rates and grade 12 graduation rates for students served by FosterEd the school year before the pandemic and the second school year impacted by the pandemic, offering a view into how students’ experiences differed across those 2 years.

The single-year stop-out rate for students in grades 9–12 was higher during the second year of the pandemic, and the single-year high school graduation rate for students in grade 12 that year was lower than during the 2018–2019 school year. This suggests high school students served by FosterEd experienced pandemic-related challenges to their schooling, as so many students have across the country. It is also possible that data quality was lower in 2020–2021 compared with 2018–2019 and this impacted the rates shown in Table 3. The data analyzed for this report was shared by ADE, which received data from districts. Since students in foster care move schools more often than students not in care, the chances that their educational records are lost or incomplete are increased. This possibility of lost or incomplete educational records may have been heightened during the pandemic as school systems were stressed with unprecedented challenges and disruptions.

Table 3: Educational Indicators for Students Served by FosterEd, 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 School Years (Percent or Average With Standard Deviation)

Student Academic Experiences	2018–2019 FosterEd Served (N = 442)	2020–2021 FosterEd Served (N = 287)
Average days enrolled	248 (79)	247 (74)
Chronic absenteeism (among elementary and middle school students) ¹	21%	32%
Participated in statewide assessments	76%	69%
Grade-Level proficiency in English Language Arts	14%	4%
Elementary school students (grades 3–5)	14%	7%
Middle school students (grades 6–8)	6%	5%
High school students (grade 10)	22%	*
Grade-Level proficiency in mathematics	16%	4%
Elementary school students (grades 3–5)	19%	8%
Middle school students (grades 6–8)	13%	*
High school students (grade 10)	11%	*
Single-year stop-out rate for high school students	11%	14%
Single-year graduation rate for grade 12 students	37%	33%

¹ The Arizona Department of Education only tracks and reports on chronic absenteeism for students in elementary and middle school, given the challenges of doing so for high school students whose schedules and attendance are based on class period rather than school day.

* Information is suppressed because the count of students is less than 11.

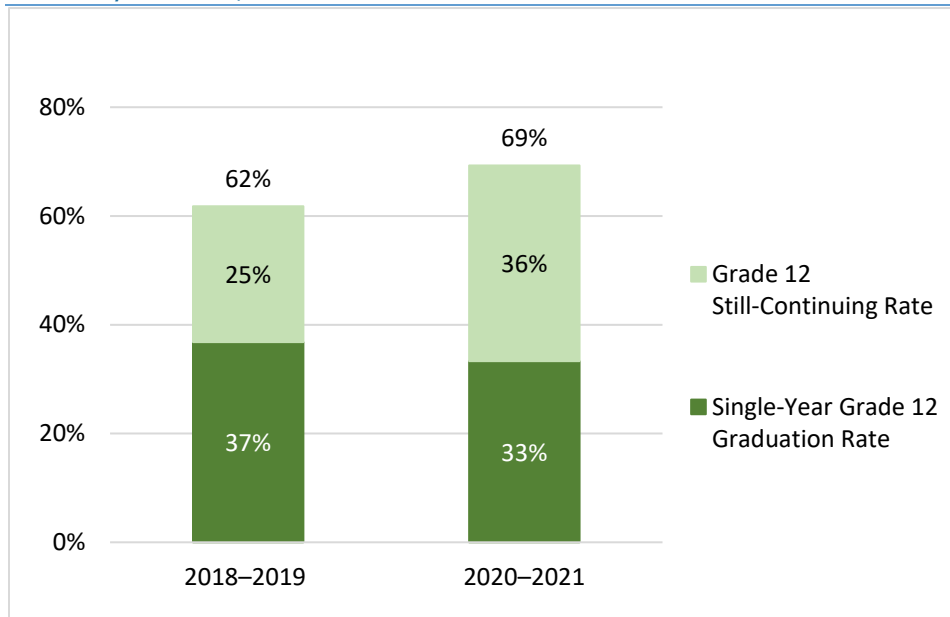
Note: Boldface blue text indicates differences of at least 3 percentage points between the 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 school years for students in foster care served by FosterEd.

Source: Analysis file constructed by RTI based on data shared by FosterEd Arizona and the Arizona Department of Education.

Considering Still-Continuing and Single-Year Graduation Rate for Grade 12 Students

We conducted an exploratory analysis to consider the percentage of grade 12 students who did not graduate in the focal year but who were still enrolled at the end of that school year and whose school indicated that the student would be enrolled for an additional year of high school to complete their diploma. Figure 1 shows information for students served by FosterEd. When we consider both single-year outcomes combined (graduation or continuing enrollment), a larger percentage of grade 12 students in foster care supported by FosterEd experienced one of these positive experiences in 2020–2021 compared with 2018–2019.

Figure 1: Still-Continuing Rate and Single-Year Graduation Rate for Grade 12 Students in Foster Care Served by FosterEd, 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 School Years



3. Feedback From Adult Team Members

During May and June 2022, we solicited feedback via an online survey from adults who had served on at least one FosterEd Educational Team during the 2021–2022 school year. RTI and FosterEd Arizona codeveloped the survey to gather information about adult team members' experiences with the FosterEd Arizona program and their perceptions of whether and how students benefited from the program. Survey invitations were sent via email to 427 adult team members, of which 51 bounced back immediately, indicating the email address was no longer valid. Of the 376 remaining adult team members, 95 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 25%. See Appendix A for more information about the survey methods and see Appendix B for a copy of the survey.

Who Were Adults Providing Feedback?

Figure 2 describes the adults who completed the feedback survey according to their connection to the student supported by FosterEd Arizona. The largest share were parents, relatives, and caregivers (26%); followed by teachers and other school and district staff (22%) and Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) specialists (18%).



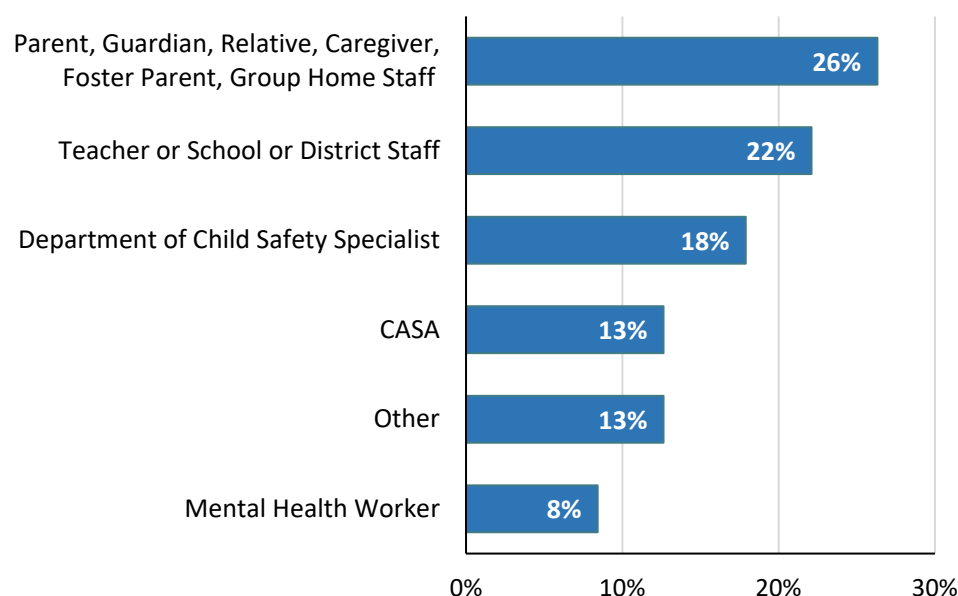
Key Findings

Survey results provide information about the perception and experiences of adults connected to students served by FosterEd, referred to as adult team members.

Most adult team members expressed positive reactions and feedback regarding FosterEd Arizona. Between 71% and 90% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to six positive statements about their own experiences with FosterEd Arizona as an adult team member. Statements receiving the highlighted level of agreement include “Working with the FosterEd team has helped me to better support the student's education,” “Working with the FosterEd team has helped me better partner with other adults in the student's life to support the student's education,” and “The FosterEd program has treated me with respect.”

Adult team members reported students benefiting from participation in FosterEd on various youth impact dimensions. Of the seven dimensions they were asked about, adults perceived the most gains on students' attitude towards school, self-confidence, and relationships with their teachers. In open-ended responses, adult team members cited students' increased self-advocacy, self-awareness, school engagement, and academic self-efficacy since working with FosterEd.

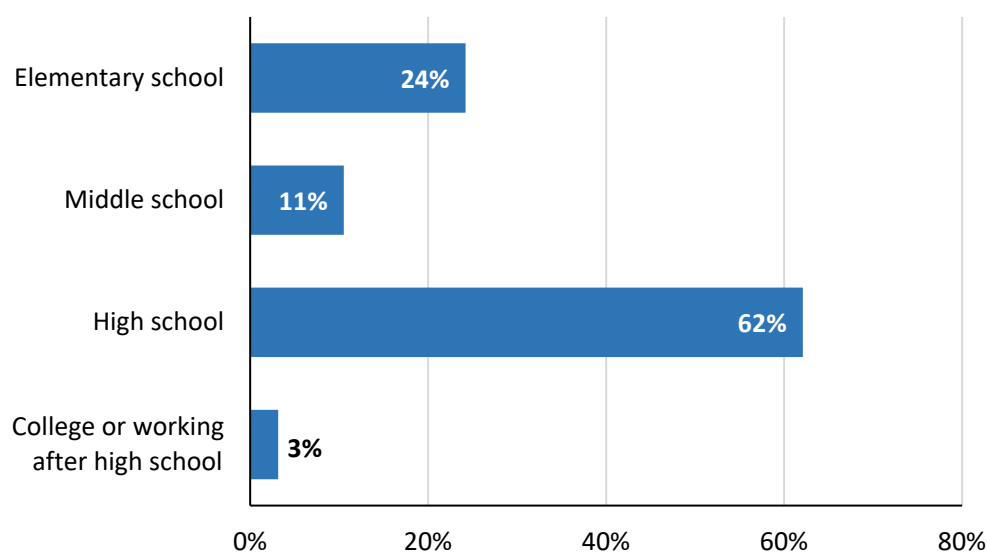
Figure 2: Relationship of Adult Team Member to Student Served by FosterEd, Among Adults Who Completed Feedback Survey



Source: Adult Team Member Survey, June 2022. Number of valid responses = 94. Missing data from one respondent are not included in the graph.

Survey respondents were asked the level of school (elementary, middle, or high) of the FosterEd Arizona student to whom they were connected (Figure 3). Most (62%) were connected to a high school student served by FosterEd. A small percentage (3%) were connected to a youth who was out of high school, either working or in college.

Figure 3: School Level of Student Served by FosterEd, as Reported by Adults Who Completed Feedback Survey



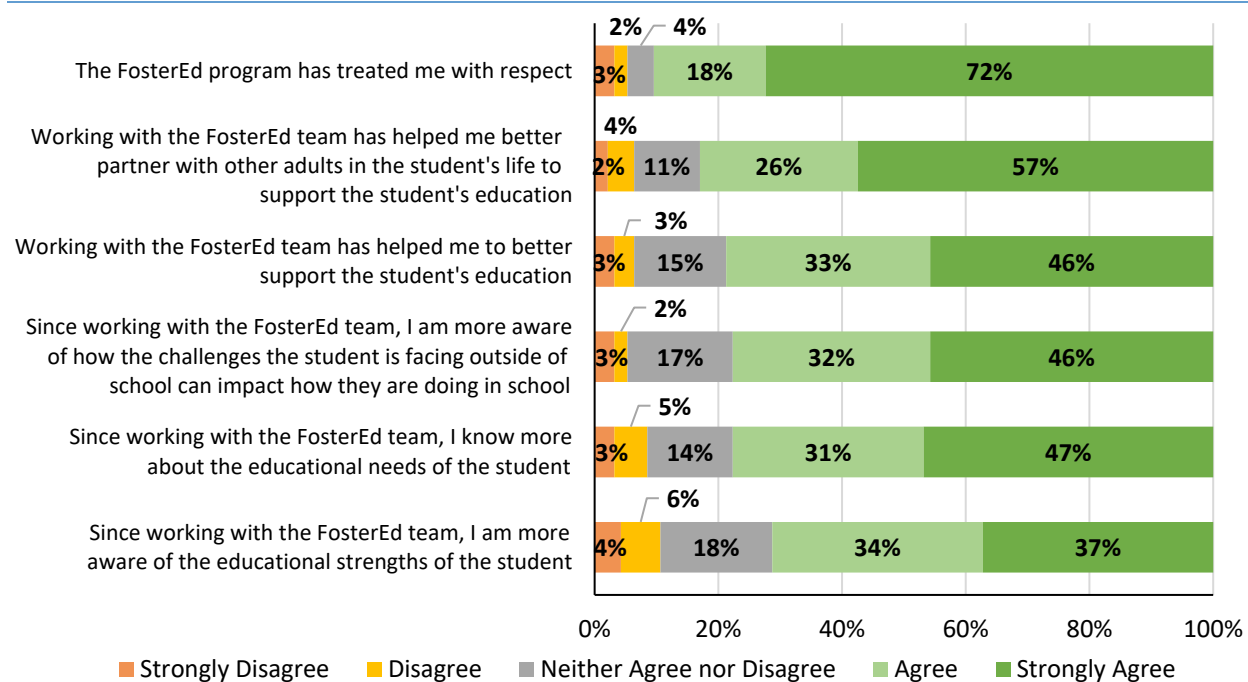
Source: Adult Team Member Survey, June 2022. Number of surveys = 95.

What Were Experiences of Adult Team Members in Program?

Adult team members were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with six statements about their experiences with FosterEd Arizona. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Across each of the six statements displayed in Figure 4, between 71% and 90% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the positive statement. The statement “The FosterEd program treated me with respect” received the highest level of agreement. The lowest level of agreement was obtained for the statement “Since working with the FosterEd team, I am more aware of the educational strengths of the student,” although more than two-thirds of respondents did agree.

Some adults, albeit a relatively small minority, reported negative experiences with the program. When we examined individual-level responses across multiple survey questions, we observed that a small group of adults provided negative feedback across multiple questions. In other words, these adults expressed negative sentiments across the survey. In reviewing their connection to a student served by FosterEd, this small group of disappointed adult team members appeared diverse (e.g., parents, other relatives and care providers; teachers and other school or district staff; DCS specialist). A summary of their qualitative feedback is provided on page 12.

Figure 4: Adult Team Members’ Experiences With FosterEd Arizona

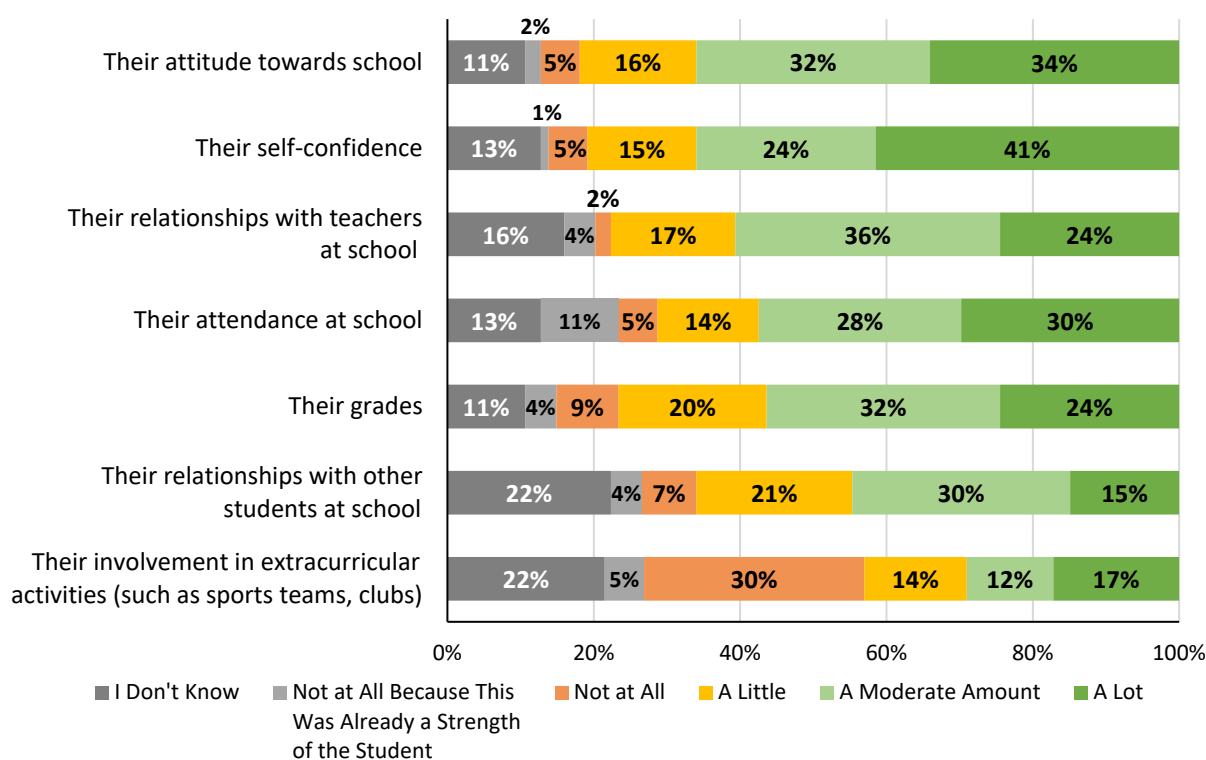


Source: Adult Team Member Survey, June 2022. Number of valid responses = 94. Missing data from one respondent are not included in the graph.

What Do Adult Team Members Perceive as Impacts of Program on Youth Served?

We asked adult team members whether they observed the student with whom they were/are connected improve on the seven youth impact dimensions listed in Figure 5 since participating in FosterEd. Sixty-six percent of respondents perceived “a little” improvement on each of the dimensions, with the exception of increased involvement in extracurricular activities (43% reported “a little” improvement). Note that between 11% and 22% reported that they did not know whether the youth improved on a dimension, and between 1% and 11% reported that the youth had not improved as it had been an existing strength. When we consider the dimensions in which adults perceived the greatest impacts (either “a lot” or “a moderate amount”), the three largest are the youth’s attitude towards school (66%), the youth’s self-confidence (65%), and the youth’s relationships with their teachers (60%).

Figure 5: Perceived Impacts of FosterEd on Youth, From Perspective of Adult Team Members (Percentage Distributions)



Source: Adult Team Member Survey, June 2022. Number of valid responses = 93–94. Missing data from respondents are not included in the graph.

Adult team members were asked an open-ended question about whether and how they thought the student had benefited since participating in FosterEd in ways other than those listed in Figure 4. Seventy-one of the 95 survey respondents provided some response, with five writing the student had not benefited in other ways, and one noting they were unsure. Eight others answered that the student had benefited in other ways but did not elaborate or described a change that was difficult to

interpret or associate with FosterEd (e.g., “The child had challenging medical conditions that played a huge role in his improvements or lack of.”) Table 4 summarizes the remaining 57 responses (some adult team members mentioned numerous benefits within their response so the number of mentions exceeds 57).

Table 4: Other Benefits to Youth From Participating in FosterEd Arizona, From Perspective of Adult Team Members

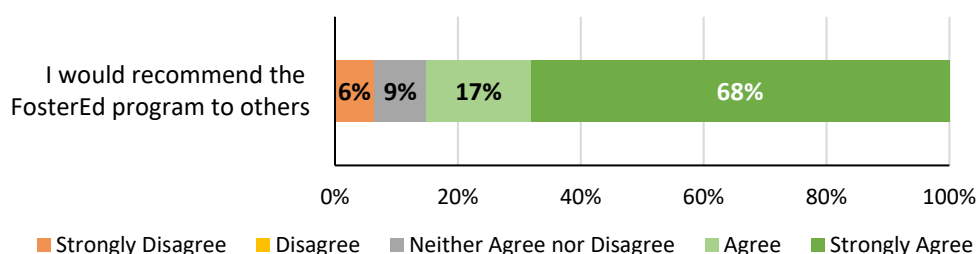
Other Benefit	Representative Quotes
Education Liaison effectively advocated for the students’ needs to be met (19 mentions)	<p>“Ensuring the youth got an IEP [Individual Education Plan] and the support services needed.”</p> <p>“The student benefited from FosterEd because they had a strong advocate that held the school accountable.”</p> <p>“Got his IEP updated and [helped him] moved to a school next to his house.”</p>
Student’s self-advocacy and self-awareness increased (14 mentions)	<p>“Gained the confidence to advocate for themselves.”</p> <p>“Youth has been able to self-evaluate and figure out needs.”</p> <p>“The student gained an understanding of where he was at and what he needed to do to graduate.”</p> <p>“Student is more aware of resources available to him.”</p>
Student’s school engagement and academic self-efficacy increased (11 mentions)	<p>“Empowered the student to feel capable of being successful and wanting to attend school instead of giving up on pursuing any form of education.”</p> <p>“He has fostered a stronger sense of responsibility and accountability towards his own education. He also has some more concrete ideas about what he wants to do after high school.”</p>
Education Liaison was consistent, dependable, and a trusted source of support to the student (15 mentions)	<p>“They feel like they have a consistent adult they can check in with when they need something or when they are feeling alone.”</p> <p>“I think having the trusted relationship with the FosterEd rep is priceless. While boundaries are maintained, it was someone who could respectfully hold her accountable, but also be that trusted adult that can change a life.”</p> <p>“I think they feel more supported and more loved through the process when FosterEd is involved.”</p>
Student benefited from collaborating adults (10 mentions)	<p>“The FosterEd program is very valuable in helping the team with connecting with the school and helping provide the best outcome for children in foster care.”</p> <p>“He had a team of adults, teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists, and the FosterEd specialist working together to fine tune the most effective strategies to use for this individual.”</p>
Student increased communication skills and improved interpersonal relationships (5 mentions)	<p>“She is opening up more regarding her needs.”</p> <p>“He seemed happier and his relationships became stronger with peers and staff.”</p> <p>“Has become more outgoing.”</p>

Adult team members were asked an open-ended question about whether the student had experienced anything negative from participating in FosterEd. Seventy-four of the 95 respondents answered this question, with 67 (or 91% of those who responded to this question) reporting that the student had not experienced anything negative. Among the seven respondents who mentioned a negative effect, responses did not show clear patterns; some comments did not necessarily suggest an overall negative impact on the student from FosterEd participation. For example, one adult noted, "Anxiety. Child had not been attending school regularly. Getting back to it was/is very overwhelming; causing anxiety." In the prior closed-ended question, the respondent reported that the student's attendance at school improved since participating in FosterEd. The additional information suggests that while that is a positive result, it was not an easy transition for the student. This adult team member's responses help to highlight the layered support many students in foster care need.

Would Adult Team Members Recommend FosterEd to Other Adults in Lives of Foster Youth?

The vast majority (85%) of adult team members who responded to the survey indicated that they would recommend FosterEd to other adults in the lives of foster youth (68% "strongly agreed" and 17% agreed; Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of Adult Team Members Who Would Recommend FosterEd Arizona (Percentage Distribution)



Source: Adult Team Member Survey, June 2022. Number of valid responses = 94. Missing data from one respondent are not included in the graph.

Among the minority of respondents (15%) who were either neutral about recommending the FosterEd program to others (9%) or would not recommend the program (6%), two themes emerged. One was that respondents believed they did not have enough information about the program and the youth's experience in it to recommend it to others. A student's attorney wrote, "It is not possible to know if it does any good without being advised of what the program does and what the student does in response. A report disclosed to the parties would be great." The second theme related to respondents believing that some Education Liaisons were not working effectively within existing systems and "came in with an agenda" and were too "pushy." Given the overwhelming positive experiences of most adults who completed the survey, these different experiences highlight the difficult nature of advocating strongly for young people. Some of the other

adults in their lives may disagree with the level, methods, or other specifics of that advocacy, and Education Liaisons may need continuing support and professional development around how best to navigate those challenges.

What Suggestions Do Adult Team Members Have for Improving the FosterEd Program?

Adult team members were asked an open-ended question about whether they had any suggestions for improving the FosterEd program. Sixty-three of the 94 survey respondents answered this question, although 36 (57% who answered this question) only indicated that they did not have any recommendations for improving the program. The 27 recommendations clustered into three themes are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Adult Team Members' Recommendations for Improving FosterEd Arizona Program

Recommendations	Representative Quotes
Expand services (15 mentions)	<p>"Making it more available. Being able to refer students who would benefit.</p> <p>"More workers to help. In Yavapai County there was one worker for the entire county."</p> <p>"I would like to see a stronger relationship with post-secondary institutions and programs to strengthen the pipeline for those students interested in post-secondary education."</p>
Expand collaboration with other adults in youth's lives (9 mentions)	<p>"A summary report showing each child for whom I am receiving help. This would be helpful because I often forget which kids I have made referrals for."</p> <p>"It is not possible to know if it does any good without being advised of what the program does and what the student does in response. A report disclosed to the parties would be great."</p> <p>"Resources for those CASAs [Court-Appointed Special Advocate] who are not educators."</p>
Increase awareness of the program (6 mentions)	<p>"I recommend the program reach out to the school and behavioral health to provide education about the program so we can utilize this service more."</p> <p>"Maybe if their services could be more widely known among caseworkers, group homes, and even schools."</p> <p>"Well, our kiddos caseworker was unaware of FosterEd. We actually sent her the PowerPoint from the virtual presentation so that she could learn about it and the program and refer the kiddo to FosterEd. Increased awareness of the program is needed."</p>

4. Conclusions

Like students across the country, students in foster care, including those served by FosterEd, struggled with heightened educational needs as the pandemic disrupted their school routines and structures. We heard these stories directly when we interviewed, in the middle of the 2020–2021 school year, students served by FosterEd and the adults in their lives (Laird & Venkateswaran, 2021). Students and adults described challenges with online learning and increased stress levels, and many had inconsistent support for online learning from their caregivers and home environments. They also described important supports provided by their Education Liaisons during this time, including helping them focus on and be motivated by their educational goals and helping them communicate with their teachers and advocate for themselves.

The new data summarized in this report from a survey of 95 FosterEd adult team members during spring 2022 reinforce findings from the 2020–2021 qualitative interviews. When asked about seven youth impact dimensions (attitude towards school, attendance, grades, relationships with other students at school, relationships with teachers, self-confidence, and involvement in extracurricular activities) 66% of respondents perceived “a little” improvement on each of the dimensions (with the exception of increased involvement in extracurricular activities in which 43% reported “a little” improvement). Dimensions in which adults perceived the greatest impacts were the youth’s attitudes towards school, their self-confidence, and their relationships with teachers.

The adult team member survey data presented in this report, and the qualitative interview data summarized in Laird & Venkateswaran (2021) align with results from an earlier study that included surveys of students served by FosterEd Arizona during the 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 school years (Laird & Warkentien, 2020). Students completed surveys as they entered the FosterEd program and again after being served for 6 months with intensive supports. Analysis revealed students increased in both their self-reported self-efficacy (e.g., “I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself”) and future orientation (e.g., “When I think about my future, I feel very positive”).

The educational indicator data presented in this report, based on data shared by ADE, describe especially challenging educational experiences students served by FosterEd had during the second school year impacted by the pandemic. Compared with 2018–2019, students served by FosterEd in 2020–2021 experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism, had lower levels of participation in statewide assessment and lower proficiency rates in English Language Arts and mathematics. High school students were more likely to stop out, and students in grade 12 were less likely to graduate. These findings and others presented in this report suggest two dynamics: students served by FosterEd during the pandemic had especially high needs (i.e., a higher proportion had a disability), and they faced deeper challenges in their schooling (i.e., experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism).

Adult team members surveyed in spring 2022 offered three general recommendations: (a) expand services to more students and expand the depth of those services (e.g., create more linkages with postsecondary institutions), (b) collaborate even more with the other adults in students' lives, and (c) increase awareness about the program. Based on the totality of data presented in this report and findings from other recent FosterEd reports (e.g., Laird & Venkateswaran, 2021; Laird & Warkentien, 2020), we agree that FosterEd Arizona provides important supports to students and that the need for supports in foster care is great, and that the three areas for growth noted in the adult team members surveys are worthy of support. As FosterEd considers this feedback, we recommend it do so with partners from ADE and local districts and schools, partners from DCS, and recent alumni from foster care, and to do so with explicit consideration of whether additional resources are available to support expansion and deepening of services. If not, we encourage partners to carefully consider changes that would be cost neutral and reasonable given staff time and to plan to examine periodically together whether those changes are in fact bringing about intended benefits.

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Appendix A: Methodology

Education Indicators Matching Process

The first step in creating the unique data file for each of the two focal school years (2018–2019 and 2020–2021) to enable examining the educational experiences of students served by FosterEd was to define the populations of interest in a manner consistent with the accompanying report, *Arizona’s Students in Foster Care: School Years 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 (Report 1)* (Laird et al., 2022). Using data shared by the Compassionate Systems Campaign of the National Center for Youth Law for the FosterEd Arizona program, we identified students who were served by FosterEd at any point during that school year (defined as August 1 to June 1) for each of the focal school years. That process resulted in 526 FosterEd-supported students for the 2018–2019 school year and 364 FosterEd-supported students for the 2020–2021 school year. We then applied the age restrictions consistent with the approach in Laird et al. (2022), which required youth to be between the ages of 5 and 17 as of September 1 of that school year. This reduced the FosterEd-served groups to 493 for the 2018–2019 school year and 319 for the 2020–2021 school year.

The next step involved identifying FosterEd-served students records in data shared by the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) and Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Following procedures similar to those used by Barrat et al. (2015) and used in our accompanying 2022 report, we conduct fuzzy matching to link foster youth in DCS to their educational records in ADE files. To do this, we relied on similar fields across the two data systems, including first name, last name, birthdate, gender, and city of foster care placement in DCS data versus city of school in ADE data. Prior to matching, the name fields in each data system were cleaned (spaces, hyphens, and other nonalphabetical characters removed). The two data systems were then matched using the following strategies, in order: direct matches on first name, last name, and birthday; direct matches on first name and last name with a manual review of birthday; use of the SOUNDEX function on a concatenation of first name, last name, and birthdate; use of the COMPGED function to compute a “matching score” between DCS and ADE records using first name, last name, and birthdate with a manual review of pairs with a high “matching score.” From one step to the next, only the residual records—those not matched in a previous step—were kept in the pool to be matched in a subsequent step.

Of the 493 2018–2019 FosterEd-supported students ages 5 to 17, we were able to match 442 (or 90%) to an education record in ADE. For the 2020–2021 school year, of the 319 FosterEd-supported youth ages 5 to 17, we were able to match 287 (or 90%) to an education record in ADE. These match rates are comparable to the 89% match rate Barrat et al. (2015) achieved for their 2012–2013 analyses.

Education Indicators Variable Definitions and Constructions

Student Characteristics Variables

Low Socioeconomic Status. This dichotomous variable was provided by ADE for each of the focal years and originally labeled “economically disadvantaged.” Students whose family incomes qualified them to receive free or reduced-price lunches were coded with a “1” and all other students with a “0.” The threshold for free lunches is a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty level, and the threshold for reduced-price lunches is between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level.

Race and Ethnicity. Information about students’ race and ethnicity came from ADE data via a series of dichotomous variables (e.g., one for whether a student is Hispanic, another for whether a student is African American). Using those variables, we constructed a variable with mutually exclusive categories. Students identified as Hispanic were counted in that category, regardless of racial identities.

Student With a Disability. Information about students’ disability status came from ADE. Students identified by their school as needing special education services and having either an Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan have a value of “1” on this variable, and all other students have a value of “0.”

English Learner. Information about student English Learner status came from ADE. Students whose first language is a language other than English and who have a less than proficient overall proficiency level on the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) are considered to not yet have a level of English language skills necessary to succeed in the school’s regular instructional program and are enrolled in special language services. Former English Learner students who were reclassified during the current school year as English proficient are also included in the English Learner group.

School Characteristics Variables

Number of Schools Attended. Based on enrollment data shared by ADE, for each of the focal school years, we constructed a variable indicating how many schools each student was enrolled in during that school year. If a student had more than one enrollment record for the same school, we counted that school only once. For example, if a student had an enrollment start date at School A of August 15 and an exit date of November 28, then another enrollment record for the same school with a start date of January 15 and final exit date of May 30 (and had no other enrollment records for the gap the student was not enrolled in School A), we counted that student as having attended one school that school year. Furthermore, if a student had dual enrollment records with identical start and end dates at more than one school, we counted only one school. In each of the two focal school years, many students had what appeared to be one-day enrollments (entry date one day, exit date the next day). This often occurred in July or August. We removed these one-day enrollments in the

count for number of schools attended as we assumed these were primarily schools updating their enrollments for students they assumed would return the next year but did not.

School Letter Grade. Arizona statute requires ADE to develop annual achievement profiles for all public schools using an A to F scale. The grading system measures year-to-year student academic growth; proficiency in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science; and proficiency and academic growth of English Learners—indicators that an elementary student is ready for success in high school and that high school students have graduated and are ready to succeed in a career or higher education. The resulting letter grades for schools for the 2018–2019 school year are available on the ADE website. We download them and merged them with ADE student enrollment records shared with us. If a student was enrolled in more than one school during the school year, we analyzed the letter grade for the school that they attended for the longest time that school year. School letter grades were paused, by statute, for the 2020–2021 school year, as lawmakers recognized that educational disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic presented limitations with the data typically included in school letter grades.

Nontraditional schools. Following the definition of nontraditional schools used in the Barrat et al. (2015) report, this report counts schools evaluated through the alternative accountability system as well as juvenile justice schools and vocational training facilities that do not offer high school diplomas as nontraditional schools. One category of nontraditional school that Barrat et al. included that we were not able to include was nonpublic schools, including those that served students with high therapeutic needs. We had not specifically requested the data for nonpublic schools; therefore, ADE had not provided it. Thus, we caution making direct comparisons of the percentage of students attending nontraditional schools in 2012–2013 as reported by Barrat et al. and in 2018–2019 and in 2020–2021 as reported by us.

ADE defines alternative schools as those whose sole and clearly stated mission is to serve specific populations of at-risk students. Schools must be certified as an alternative school by ADE and must intend to serve students in one or more of the following categories that reflect an alternative school setting necessary for these students:

- Students who have a documented history of disruptive behavior issues
- Students who have dropped out of school and are now returning
- Students in poor academic standing as demonstrated by being at least 1 year behind on grade-level performance or academic credits
- Students who are primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents and, therefore, may require a flexible school schedule
- Students who are adjudicated
- Students who are wards of the state and are in need of an alternative school setting

We downloaded lists of alternative schools for each of the two focal school years from ADE's website and merged that information with ADE student enrollment records shared with us. ADE provided us with lists of vocational schools and juvenile justice schools, and we merged that information with ADE student enrollment records shared with us.

Educational Experiences Variables

Chronic Absenteeism (Among Elementary and Middle School Students). We constructed this dichotomous variable using ADE data for each of the two focal school years. Chronic absenteeism is defined by ADE as being absent from school 10% or more of the time, regardless of the reason and whether it was excused or not excused. ADE reports chronic absenteeism for students in grades K–8. Given the complications of defining it for high school students, when students typically have multiple periods per day and may attend some but not others, ADE does not track or report chronic absenteeism for students in grades 9–12. Using absence data shared by ADE for students in grades K–8, we coded students as "1" if they were absent 18 or more days in the focal school year (there are 180 days in the school year). Students who had fewer than 18 absences were coded as "0."

Participation in Statewide Assessments. Assessment participation was coded as a dichotomous variable for each of the focal school years. Only students in grades 3–8 and 10 were included in the statewide assessment analyses. Students were coded as "1" if they participated in a spring AzMERIT assessment (Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching; statewide achievement test), regardless of content area, test completion status, or score, or if they took AZELLA at any point during the 2018–2019 school year. Students who did not take the AZELLA and did not participate in any spring AzMERIT assessment were coded as "0." AzMERIT replaced AIMS (Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards) as Arizona's statewide achievement test in 2015. Since AzMERIT was specially developed and customized for Arizona to be more rigorous and has a different and more complex scoring system, AIMS scores from the 2013–2014 school year cannot be compared with AzMERIT scores. Additionally, more changes in statewide assessments are expected for the 2022 school year as Arizona shifts from AzMERIT to AzM2.

Mathematics Proficiency. Students' mathematics proficiency was measured using the AzMERIT assessment. Arizona public school students in grades 3 through high school take the assessment, either at their grade level (through grade 8) or as an end-of-course assessment (grade 10). Only spring assessment scores were included in the analysis. If students had more than one spring assessment, only the highest of the scores was retained. AzMERIT scores include these proficiency levels: minimally proficient, partially proficient, proficient, and highly proficient. Students who were proficient or highly proficient were coded as "1," and students who were partially proficient or minimally proficient were coded with as "0."

English Language Arts Proficiency. Students' English Language Arts proficiency was measured using the AzMERIT assessment. Arizona public school students in grades 3 through high school take the assessment, either at their grade level (through grade 8) or as an end-of-course assessment (grade 10). Only spring assessment scores were included in the analysis. If students had more than one spring assessment, only the highest of the scores was retained. AzMERIT scores include these proficiency levels: minimally proficient, partially proficient, proficient, and highly proficient. Students who were proficient or highly proficient were coded as "1," and students who were partially proficient or minimally proficient were coded as "0."

Single-Year High School Stop-Out Rate. This is a dichotomous variable constructed from ADE data, specifically from a variable that indicated a student's end-of-year exit status. We coded as "1" any high school student whose end-of-year exit status was "expelled or long-term suspension," "attendance record showing 10 consecutive days of unexcused absence or status unknown," "dropout," "student withdrew before scheduled end of school year expressly for the purpose of obtaining a GED," "student withdrew before scheduled end of school year to continue studies at a technical or vocational school which does not award HS [high school] diploma," or "student did not have an exit code." We coded as "0" any high school student whose end-of-year exit status was anything else.

Single-Year Grade 12 Graduation Rate. This is a dichotomous variable constructed from ADE data, specifically a variable that indicated students' end-of-year status. We coded as "1" any grade 12 student whose end-of-year status was "graduated" and "0" any grade 12 student whose end-of-year status was anything other than "graduated." Students who graduated at any point in the school year, including the following summer, were counted. Graduates are students who have met one of the following requirements to receive a high school diploma: completed a course of study for high school OR completed an Individual Education Plan. The ADE data do not specify whether students earned a high school diploma by completing a course of study for high school or by completing an Individual Education Plan. A GED (General Educational Development) certificate is not a high school diploma, and students who earn GEDs are not considered high school graduates (by ADE or other education agencies).

Limitations of the Educational Indicator Data and Single-Year Snapshot Analysis Approach Presented in This Report

The analyses presented in this report have a number of limitations. First, they are based on a study population of students served by FosterEd who were between the ages of 5 and 17 as of September 1 of the focal year (i.e., September 1, 2018, for the 2018–2019 school year). We applied these age restrictions in this report and the accompanying report (Laird et al., 2022) to be consistent with Barrat et al.'s (2015) report covering the 2012–2013 school year. They explained their use of the under 18 age restriction as a recognition that students in foster care have the option to exit the child welfare system at age 18. However, we know some students elect to remain in care between the

ages of 18 and 21, and we know FosterEd serves some students who are 18 or older who are in school or preparing to enter college or reenter high school and who choose to be supported by FosterEd. Furthermore, FosterEd staff have pointed out that students in foster care may be older when they graduate given that they experience more school moves than students not in foster care and may have additional gaps in their education both before they come into care and while they are in care. Staff note it is not uncommon for students in foster care to spend 5 years in high school and to be 18 or older when they start grade 12. Thus, our reliance on study populations of students aged 5 to 17 at the start of the school year likely presents an undercount of graduation rates during each of the focal school years.

Our analyses are also limited by virtue of relying on educational data available through ADE, which receives data from districts. Since students in foster care move schools more frequently than students not in foster care, the opportunity for incomplete records at schools and transferred to ADE are heightened for students in foster care. Finally, the analysis approach taken in this report of two single-year snapshots means that we have not taken a longitudinal analysis approach of following the same set of students across multiple years to examine, for example, the percentage of students served by FosterEd who graduated high school within 5 years and how that rate varied before and after the pandemic.

Adult Team Member Survey

We codeveloped with FosterEd Arizona staff a survey to ask adult team members about their experience with the FosterEd program and perceptions of whether and how participating students in foster care have benefited from the program. The survey also asked adult team members for advice for improving the program. An English and Spanish version of the survey was programmed into Alchemer, an online survey platform. A copy of the English version of the survey is included in Appendix B.

To produce a list of adults to survey who had adequate opportunity to experience the program and relatively recent experience to limit potential biases of diminished recall, we developed these eligibility criteria:

- The adult served on a youth's FosterEd team
- The youth was served by FosterEd for at least 4 months when the list was developed (in April 2022, a month before the launch of the survey)
- The youth's FosterEd case had to be currently open and closed within the current academic year (2020–2021).

These criteria yielded a list of 664 adults. Note that some adults served on more than one youth's FosterEd team. For example, a DCS specialist may have had multiple youth involved in FosterEd. The list of adults 664 represented unduplicated adults (if adults were connected to more than one youth served by the program, they were instructed to answer about the youth who was served the

longest). We then asked FosterEd to delete any adult who was listed as being on a youth's team but with whom the FosterEd team had not had any interaction. That resulted in a list of 429 adults. FosterEd Arizona used the email campaign feature in Alchemer to send out survey requests to these adults (427 were sent the English survey and 2 the Spanish survey). The first request was sent May 2, 2022, and five reminder messages were sent to nonrespondents over a 5-week period. Of the 429 initial requires, 54 bounced back immediately, indicating the email address was no longer valid. Of the 375 remaining adult team members, 95 completed the survey by the end of the survey period, yielding a response rate of 25%. It is important acknowledge note that the survey results presented in this report reflect the one-out-of-four adults who were invited to complete the survey and were able to do so and chose to do so. Those who could not complete the survey (because of limited access to their email and/or competing time demands from their work and/or caregiving responsibilities) or chose not to (perhaps because they did want to share their feedback or did not feel comfortable doing so) may have had difference experiences and perceptions of youth impacts than adults who did complete the survey.

Appendix B: Adult Team Member Survey

FosterEd Team Member Survey

Thank you for taking this survey about your experiences with the FosterEd program. Your feedback about what has worked well, and what can be improved, is important. FosterEd will use your feedback to strengthen the program to best support students in foster care to succeed in school.

This survey is voluntary, and your answers will be kept anonymous. That is, your answers will not be tied back to your name. The survey will take less than 15 minutes.

To respect the privacy of the student in foster care, please do not use any names in your survey answers. (Your answers to the survey will be kept anonymous.)

Since your feedback is very important, we are raffling off a \$100 Visa Gift Card! If you take the survey by **June 1, 2022 you will be** automatically entered into the raffle.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dan Senter, Deputy Director and Counsel (dsenter@youthlaw.org, 510-835-8098) or Jen Laird at RTI International. The survey information will be summarized by RTI International, a nonprofit research organization.

The first set of questions asks about your experience partnering with FosterEd to support a student in foster care.

If you are connected to more than one student who is supported by FosterEd, think about the student who has been supported by FosterEd the longest.

1. What is your relationship with the student involved in FosterEd?

- Parent, Guardian, Relative, Caregiver, Foster Parent, Group Home Staff
- Teacher or School or District Staff
- Department of Child Safety Specialist
- Mental Health Worker
- CASA
- Other
- I do not know of a student involved with FosterEd, so I will not be able to answer questions about FosterEd. <Skip to end of survey>

2. What is the school level of the student involved in FosterEd?

- Elementary school
 - Middle school
 - High school
 - College or working after high school
-

3. Please answer how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Since working with the FosterEd team, I know more about the educational <u>needs</u> of the student.					
Since working with the FosterEd team, I am more aware of the educational <u>strengths</u> of the student.					
Since working with the FosterEd team, I am more aware of how the challenges the student is facing outside of school can impact how they are doing in school.					
Working with the FosterEd team has helped me to better support the student's education.					
Working with the FosterEd team has helped me better partner with other adults in the student's life to support the student's education.					
The FosterEd program has treated me with respect.					

4. Please mark whether you have seen the student improve in the following areas since participating in FosterEd.

	Not at All	A Little	A Moderate Amount	A Lot	I Don't Know	Not at All Because This Was Already a Strength of the Student
Their attitude towards school						
Their attendance at school						
Their grades						
Their relationships with other students at school						
Their relationships with teachers at school						
Their self-confidence						
Their involvement in extracurricular activities (such as sports teams, clubs)						

5. Do you think the student has benefited in other ways since participating in FosterEd? If so, please explain.

6. Do you think the student has experienced anything negative from participation in FosterEd? If so, please explain.

7. Please answer how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statement:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would recommend the FosterEd program to others.					

8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the FosterEd program?

9. Do you have any additional comments about the FosterEd program you would like to share?

Thank you for taking our survey!

Your response is very important to continue strengthening the FosterEd program.

You will be automatically entered to the raffle for the \$100 Visa Gift Card.

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 5,000 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, five regional offices in the United States, 10 international offices, and many project-specific offices around the world. This project is conducted out of the California office.

RTI's Center for Research and Evaluation in Educational Equity (RE3) works with an array of public and private partners to conduct rigorous research and evaluations that enhance educational policies and programs. To this end, we forge committed partnerships with communities and stakeholders, bringing a great breadth of education experience and a wide array of rigorous research methods. Together, we conduct studies that identify effective practices for improving outcomes across demographic groups. RE3 is distinguished especially through our focus on increasing educational equity, both in terms of opportunities and outcomes. Our work enhances current approaches to education and equity through our publications, partnerships, and scientific advocacy.



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