



FosterEd Antelope Valley Survey Project

Memo Prepared for Compassionate Systems,
National Center for Youth Law

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Introduction

In December 2020, the National Center for Youth Law contracted with RTI International to support a survey project aimed at better understanding the short-term outcomes for the young people supported by their Compassionate Systems programs in California, including their FosterEd program in Antelope Valley. RTI and Compassionate Systems partnered previously to develop a youth survey about students' social and emotional wellbeing dimensions that have been linked with positive youth development. The original survey was designed to be administered as students started working with Compassionate Systems programs in California and at every six-month interval thereafter. RTI had also developed a short survey to ask students about their experiences with and feedback on the program at the 6-month mark of their involvement in the program. Between May 2018 and 2020, FosterEd Antelope Valley administered those two original surveys and RTI summarized the results in a July 2020 memo.

The goal of this survey project launched in December 2020 was to revise the surveys to focus on outcomes most important to the Compassionate Systems program and to simplify the survey administration process. Simplifying the administration processes included combining the social emotional wellbeing and feedback surveys into a single survey, modifying the survey design from a pre-program and follow-up design to a point-in-time design, and programming the revised survey into an online survey platform. The FosterEd Antelope Valley staff administered this new survey between May 12, 2021 and June 30, 2021. Education Liaisons asked students who had been supported by the program for at least four months to complete the survey. Twenty-two of the 47 students (47%) who met this criterion completed the survey. Eight of the responding students were in high school and enrolled in the Antelope Valley Union High School District and 14 were in middle school and enrolled in the Lancaster School District. Sample sizes were too small to report results separately for middle school and high school students.

Survey Results

The section summarizes the quantitative and qualitative results from the FosterEd Antelope Valley youth survey conducted in May and June of 2021.

Contact with and Perceptions of Education Liaisons

- Just over half (55%) of youth had contact with their Education Liaison 3 or more times per month, and an additional one-third (32%) had contact 1 or 2 times per month (Table 1).
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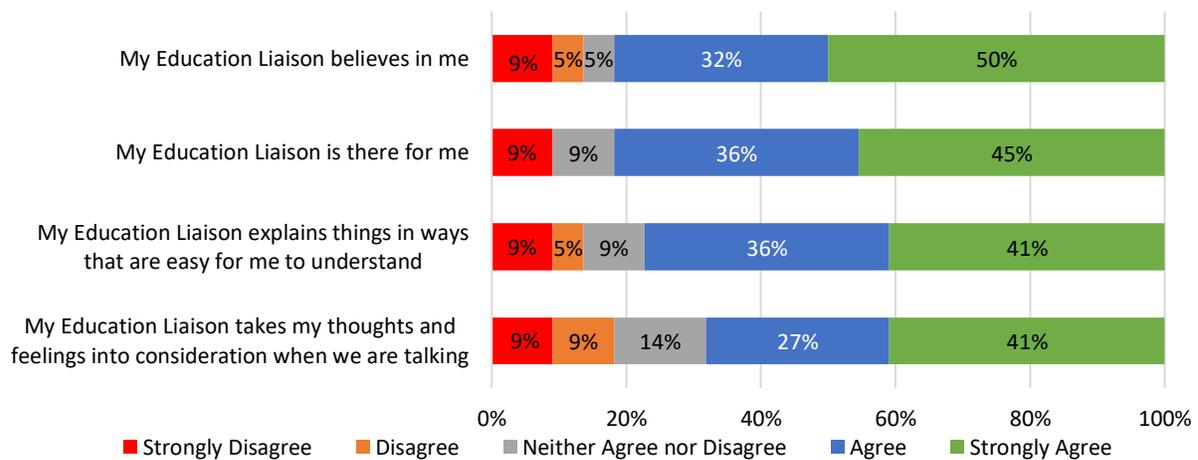
- Almost all (95%) youth were satisfied with the amount of contact they had with their Education Liaison.
- Students' perceptions of their Education Liaisons were generally positive, with at least three-fourths responding that they agreed or strongly agreed that their Education Liaison believed in them, was there for them, and explained things in ways that were easy for them to understand (Figure 1). However, between 9% and 18% did not have favorable perceptions of their Education Liaison (i.e., they answered strongly disagree or disagree to the positive statements about their Education Liaisons).

Table 1. Education Liaison Contact Frequency and Level of Satisfaction

	Count	Percent
Frequency of contact		
Less than once a month	3	14%
1-2 times per month	7	32%
3 or more times per month	12	55%
Satisfied with amount of contact		
No, would like less	1	5%
Yes	21	95%
No, would like more	0	0%

Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 1. Students' Perceptions of Education Liaisons



Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Education Liaison Supports

Students were asked to describe a time that their Education Liaison helped them do, achieve, or learn something that was meaningful to them. Table 2 summarizes the most common types of support students mentioned receiving from their Education Liaison.

Table 2. Types of Support Provided by Education Liaisons

Support Provided	Representative quotes
Motivation and organization 	"Towards the end of the year I began to lose focus and [Education Liaison] helped me and gave me advice to motivate me to succeed." "She helped me with scheduling to turn in work on time." "My education liaison helps me achieve my goals like doing my missing work going to school on time and improving my attendance." "My Education Liaison helped me stay motivated." "When I was going to take a test and she helped me study, and she motivated me."
Planning for future 	"My liaison was able to help me with getting my diploma and assisted me with many options for my future." "Helped me with college a lot, if it was getting in contact with college counselors to see if I am set, any programs etc."
Accessing alternative and additional supports 	"Very helpful with helping me find an alternative to learning when I was having problems with my grades and attendance." "She helped me with... contacting me about resources with the school."
Individualized Support 	"She was always there for me when I felt like I had no one and I felt like giving up on school she helped me graduate basically :)" "I've always needed an extra push and she made sure to give me that and thanks to her I graduated." "Always checking in and seeing how to make my grades better and helps me with whatever I need." "Something that is very meaningful to me is that she explains things with patience and helps me understand what she's talking about." "She believes in me when nobody else would and to me that spark me to do better in life."

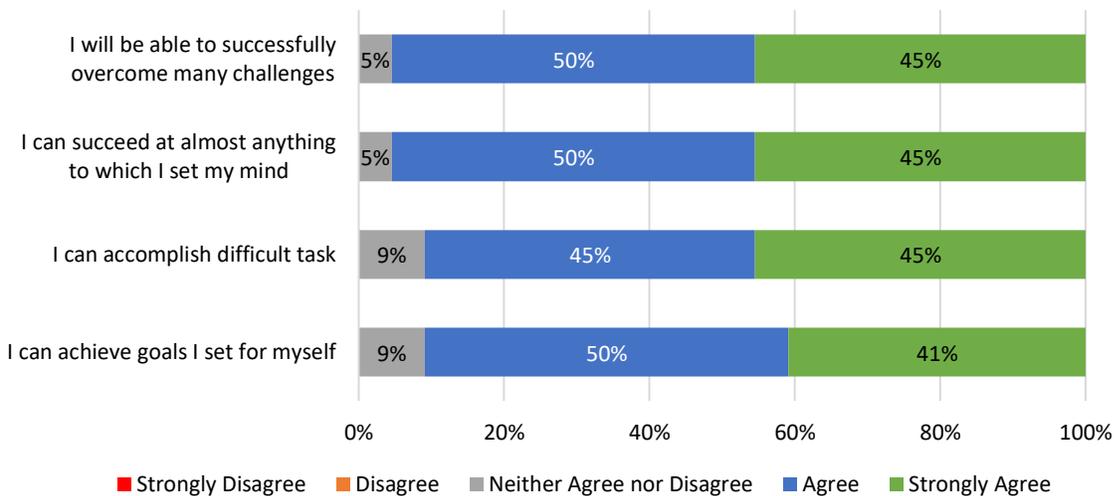
Growth Since Working with Education Liaisons

Nearly all youth reported growth in aspects of self-efficacy after working with their Education Liaison.

- Self-efficacy is the youth's belief in their ability to produce certain outcomes through their behavior and actions. Ninety-five percent (95%) of youth agreed or strongly agreed that after working with their Education Liaison they were more confident in their ability to successfully overcome many challenges, and were more confident they can succeed at most anything to which they set their mind. Nine out of ten youth (90%) reported being more confident that they could accomplish difficult tasks, and 90% reported being more confident they can achieve goals they set for themselves (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Students' Growth in Self-Efficacy Since Working with their Education Liaison

Since starting to work with my Education Liaison, I've become more confident that...

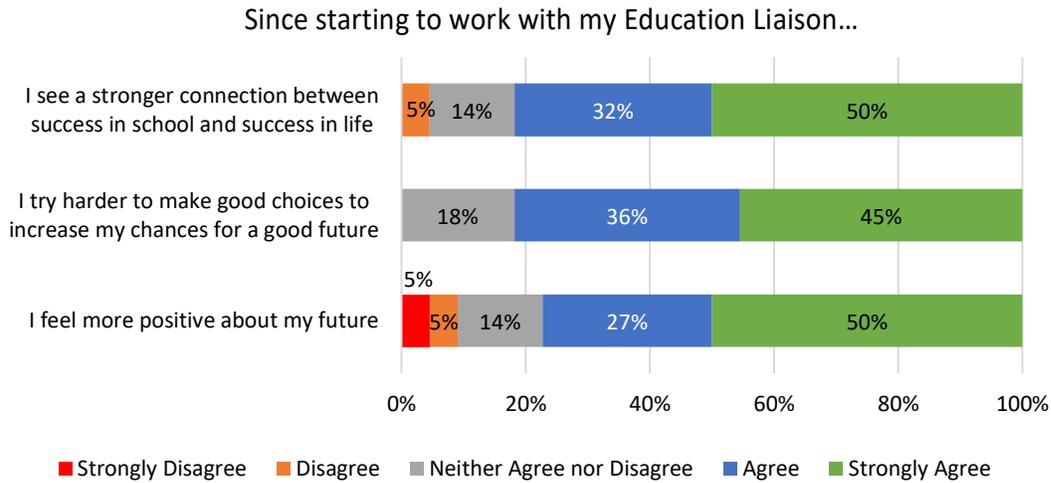


Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Most youth reported increased future success orientation after working with their Education Liaison.

- Future success orientation is the ability to set future goals and plans and have a positive outlook on one's future. At least three-fourth of youth agreed or strongly agreed to three statements related to future success orientation (Figure 3). For example, 82% reported that they saw a stronger connection between success in school and success in life since working with their Education Liaison, and 77% answered that they feel more positive about their future. However, 10% (or 2 youth) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel more positive about their future and 14% (or 3 youth) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Figure 3. Students' Growth in Future-Success Orientation Since Working with their Education Liaison

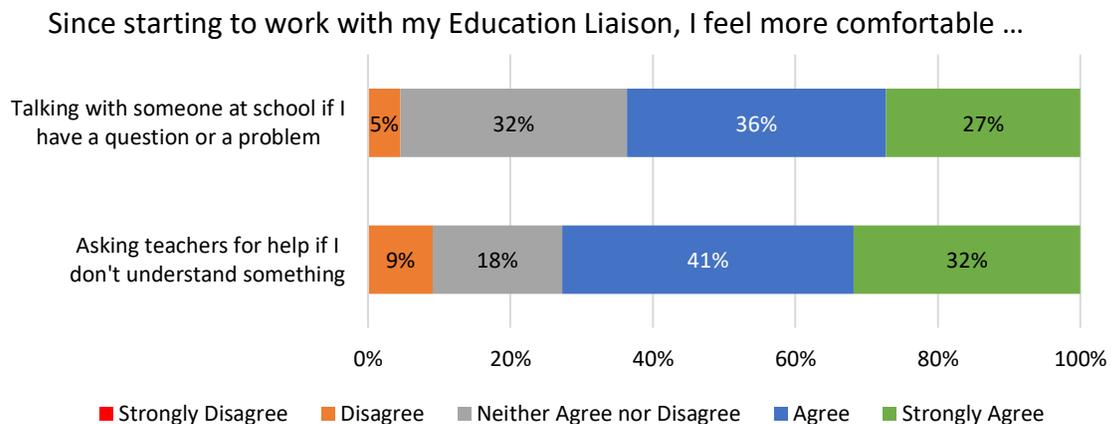


Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Youth reported positive changes in self-advocacy at school between when they started working with their Education Liaison and when they completed the survey.

- With respect to self-advocacy at school, about three-quarters of youth (73%) reported feeling more comfortable since working with their Education Liaison in asking a teacher for help they didn't understand something and 63% reported feeling more comfortable talking with someone at school if they had a question or problem (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Students' Growth in Self-Advocacy at School Since working with their Education Liaison

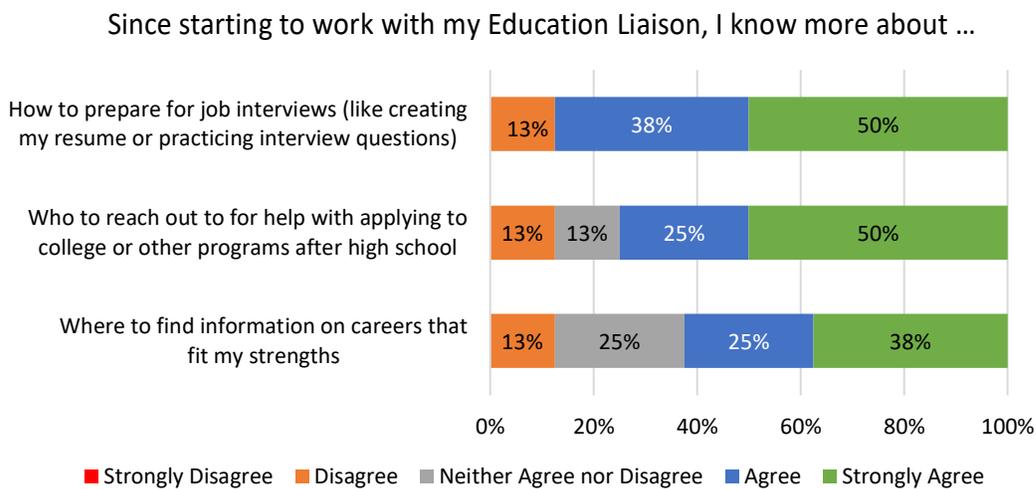


Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Most high school youth reported knowing more about options for their future after working with their Education Liaison.

- Three questions about knowledge about preparing for college and careers were asked just of the high school youth (Figure 5). Among the 8 high school youth who completed the survey, 7 (or 88%) reported they knew more about how to prepare for a job interview since working with their Education Liaison. Six (or 75%) knew more about who to reach out to for help in applying to college or other program after high school. Five (or 63%) knew more about where to find information on careers that fit their strengths.

Figure 5. Students' Growth in Knowledge of Postsecondary Options Since Working with their Education Liaison



Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Relationships with Other Adults Since Working with Education Liaisons

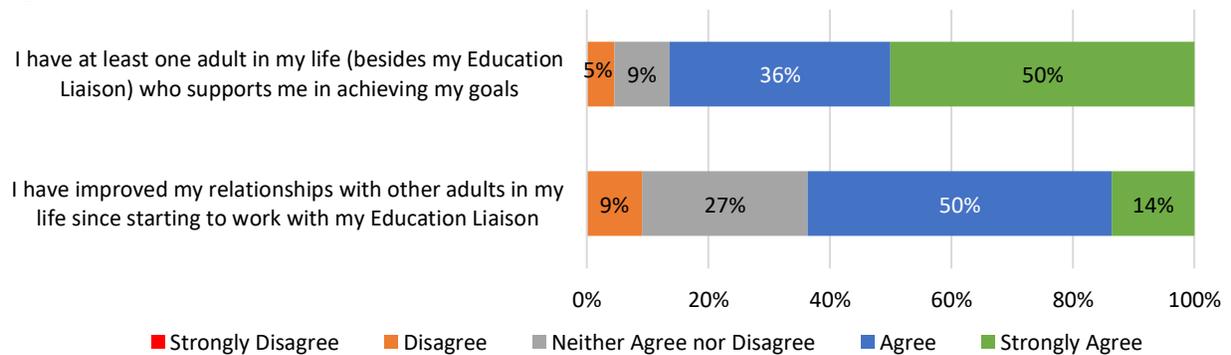
In addition to direct supports to the youth, Education Liaisons seek to help strengthen the ability of other adults in the youth's life to support the young person's education and social emotional wellbeing. The survey therefore asked youth a few questions about adults other than their Education Liaison, and to think about family members, foster parents, teachers, counselors, mentors, coaches, or adult friends when answering those questions.

Most youth reported improved relationship with other adults.

- At the time they took the survey (i.e., at least 4 months after starting work with FosterEd), eighty-six percent of youth (86%) felt that they had at least one adult in their

life besides their Education Liaison who supports them in achieving their goals.¹ Sixty-four percent (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that their relationships with other adults had improved since working with the Education Liaison.

Figure 6. Relationship with Other Adults



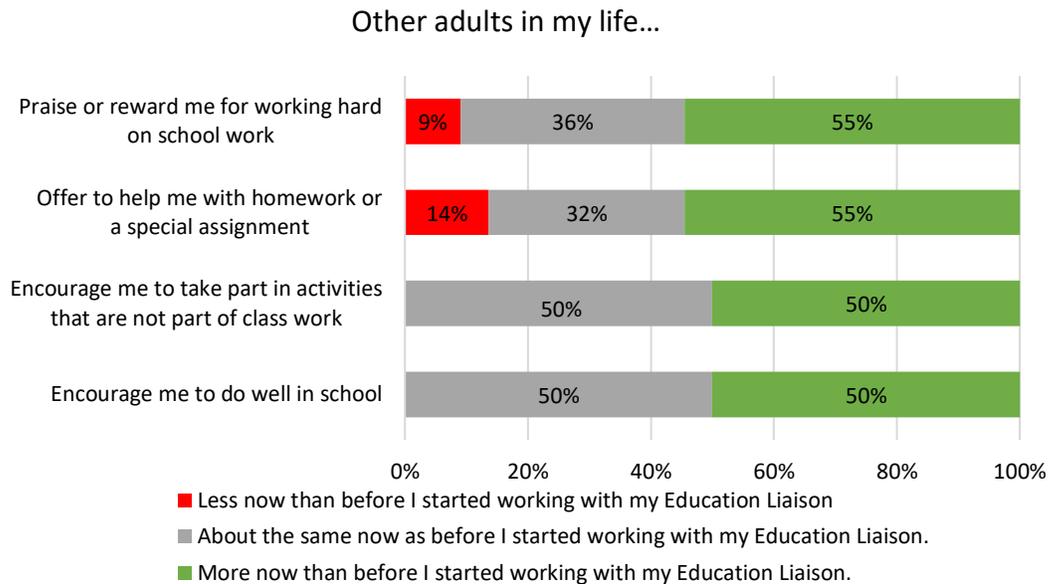
Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

About half of youth reported increased positive interaction with other adults about educational matters.

- Between 50% and 55% reported that they had more frequent positive interactions with other adults in their lives since working with their Education Liaison (Figure 7). For example, 55% reported other adults in their life praise or reward them for working hard in school more now than before they started working with their Education Liaison.

¹ A somewhat similar question was asked in the pre-program and six-month follow-up surveys administered between May 2018 and 2020. Even before they were supported by FosterEd (i.e., in the pre-program survey), 94% of the Antelope Valley youth responded that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they had at least one adult in their life who supported and encouraged their education. We mention this to caution readers against assuming this finding of 86% of youth surveyed in May and June of 2021 reporting they have an adult who supports them in achieving their goals can be attributed to their experience with FosterEd.

Figure 7. Interactions with Other Adults Since Working with their Education Liaison

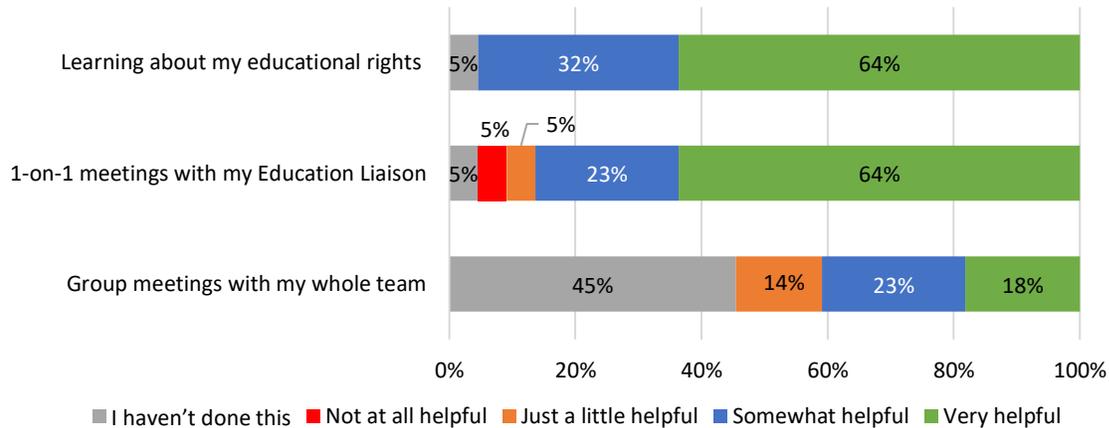


Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Feedback on the Program

- The vast majority of youth (96%) reported that working with their Education Liaison to learn about their education rights was somewhat or very helpful, and 87% of youth reported that 1-on-1 meetings with their Education Liaison were somewhat or very helpful (Figure 8).
- Almost half (45%) reported that they did not have group meetings with their “whole team.” Among the 12 who did, four found the meetings to be very helpful, five found them to be somewhat helpful, and three found them just a little helpful.

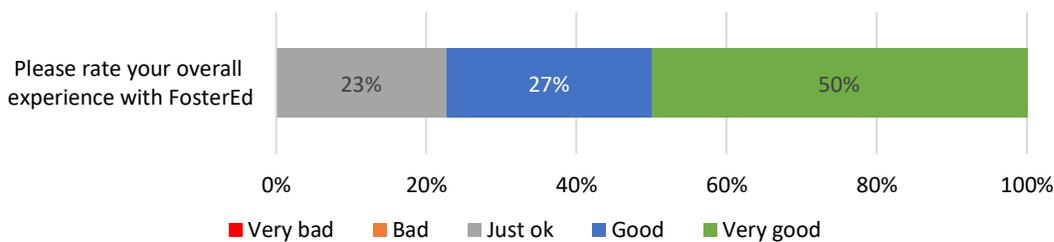
Figure 8. Students' Report of Helpfulness of Various Program Activities



Details may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- Fifty percent (50%) of youth reported that they had a very good experience with FosterEd, and 27% reported that they had a good experience (Figure 9). Twenty-three percent (23%) rated it as "just ok".

Figure 9. Overall Experience with FosterEd



Students were asked how the program could improve to better support them. Many students did not have a recommendation, responding with comments such as, "I feel like there isn't any need for better support," and "I don't know." The recommendations that young people did offer mostly related to strengthening relationships with the young person and around communication:

- "I feel it would be helpful if they would try and connect with me on a more personal level sometimes. If [feels] odd working with people that know almost nothing about me."
- "It could improve on better quality communication but other than that it's good."
- "Just keep checking in on me that all."

Conclusions

- Among the youth who responded to the survey, the vast majority (87%) were meeting with their Education Liaisons at least once a month and nearly all youth (95%) were satisfied with the amount of contact they had with their Education Liaison.
 - Youth reported growth across multiple dimensions since beginning to work with their Education Liaison, including self-advocacy (e.g., feeling more comfortable telling a teacher when they didn't understand something or reaching out to teachers for help on assignments), and self-efficacy (e.g., being more confident that they can succeed at the goals they set for themselves). About three-quarters of students reported growth in their future success orientation (e.g., feeling more positive about their future).
 - When youth were asked to share about a time that their Education Liaison helped them do, achieve, or learn something that was meaningful to them, youth reported on multiple domains, including increasing their motivation, helping to get organized, helping plan for their future, helping with access to alternative and additional supports, and providing individualized support.
 - Just over three-quarters (77%) of youth reported that they had a very good or good experience with FosterEd. The same question was asked during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, and all of the 20 Antelope Valley students who answered one of surveys reported that they had a very good or good experience with FosterEd. Furthermore, all the students who responded during the 2018-19 or 2019-2020 school year reported that their one-on-one meetings with their Education Liaisons were very helpful. Of the students who responded to this same question in May or June of 2021, 64% reported the one-on-one meetings were very helpful. The surveys and this memo were not intended to compare the experiences of students served across different school years. Nevertheless, students' somewhat lower satisfaction with their overall FosterEd experience, and specifically with one-on-one meetings with their Education Liaisons, may relate to students' experiences during the pandemic and the additional challenges Education Liaisons faced in supporting students.
 - Although the survey's response rate of 47% provides valuable information on the experiences of Antelope Valley students with FosterEd, we do not have data on the experiences of the 53% of eligible youth who did not complete the survey. It is possible that non-respondents had less positive experiences than their responding peers, but it is also possible that non-respondents were not able to complete the survey for reasons unrelated to their experiences in the program.
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RTI International is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to conducting innovative, multidisciplinary research that improves the human condition. With a worldwide staff of more than 3,700 people, RTI is active in education, child welfare, justice systems, health and medicine, environmental protection, and international development. RTI maintains company headquarters in North Carolina, eight regional offices in the United States, 10 international offices, and many project-specific offices around the world. This project is conducted out of the Berkeley, California, and Washington, DC, offices.

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