Texas Blueprint Implementation Task Force

Final Report

February 27, 2015

Children's
Commission

TEXAS BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010, the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families ("Children's Commission") established an Education Committee to identify contributing factors and potential solutions to address the poor educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care. The result of this statewide collaboration was the creation of the *Texas Blueprint*: *Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care* ("*Texas Blueprint*") in 2012 and the first phase of implementation of the recommendations that ended in December of 2014 ("Phase I").

The *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Task Force ("Task Force") was charged with the prioritization of over 125 *Texas Blueprint* recommendations. In doing so, the Task Force created the Data and Information Sharing, School Stability, and Training and Resources Workgroups. Members of the three workgroups and the Task Force worked closely together over the two-year Phase I implementation period and monitored the initiation or completion of over 80% of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations.

The accomplishments of Phase I can be categorized as legislative, training, tools, data, and agency resources, some highlights of which include:

- Education Decision Maker provisions in the law;
- Texas' first Foster Care and Education Summit;
- Development of the Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide;
- Creation of the Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates ("CASA") Educational Advocacy Toolkit;
- Amendment of a data sharing Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between the Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS") and the Texas Education Agency ("TEA");
- Development of a more in-depth data exchange, including formulation of more specific data elements; and
- Significant dedication of staff time and resources at TEA, DFPS, the Children's Commission, the Texas Association of School Boards ("TASB"), and other organizations.

The Task Force and workgroup members agreed that collaboration was the primary reason for the success of Phase I implementation, but some members felt the broad scope of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations presented challenges, particularly in the areas of school stability and training and resource development. Accordingly, the Task Force recommends the creation of a standing Foster Care and Education Committee of the Children's Commission, to be comprised of cross-system, multi-disciplinary, and diverse membership. If approved by the Children's Commission, the Foster Care and Education Committee would define a shared mission, clarify the committee objectives, and develop a working structure.

I. THE *TEXAS BLUEPRINT* IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE AND ITS CHARGE

While it is important to identify educational challenges of children and youth in the Texas foster care system, there can be no significant progress without a sustained focus on the solutions. To maintain Texas' collaborative momentum that began with the Education Committee and the release of the *Texas Blueprint*, the Supreme Court of Texas issued an order in December 2012 discharging the Education Committee and establishing the Task Force to monitor execution of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations.[1]

A. Task Force Membership and Charge

The December 2012 court order set out the membership of the Task Force, which was a deliberate mix of individuals with diverse perspectives and experience. Judge Robert Hofmann was appointed to be the Chair of the Task Force. Additional Task Force members were appointed to provide other stakeholder perspectives and support workgroup efforts.

Task Force Members
- Hon. Robert Hofmann, 452nd District Court, Chair
- Sarah Abrahams, Systems Improvement Analyst, Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
- Joy Baskin, Director of Legal Services, Texas Association of School Boards
- Hon. Alyce Bondurant, Child Protection Court of North Texas
- Edna Butts, Director, Intergovernmental Relations and Policy Oversight, Foster Care Liaison, Austin Independent School District
- Cathy Cockerham, Training Director, Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Lori Duke, Clinical Professor, Children's Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law
- Maya Guerra Gamble, Attorney at Law
- Jenny Hinson, Division Administrator for Permanency, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Hon. Cathy Morris, Child Protection Court of South Texas
- Wanda Peña, Senior Director, San Antonio Field Office, Casey Family Programs
- Michael Redden, Executive Director, New Horizons Ranch and Center Inc.
- Jessica Sheely, Student, McCombs School of Business, The University of Texas
- Ian Spechler, Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Texas
- Julie Wayman, Director of Dropout Prevention and At-Risk Programs, Texas Education Agency

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[1] The Order Establishing the Task Force is attached as **Appendix A**.

The Task Force was given a two-year term, which ran from December 2012 until December 2014. During this two-year term, the goal of the Task Force was to prioritize the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations and begin statewide systemic implementation. The conclusion of the two-year duration now signals an opportunity to evaluate the implementation process thus far and determine next steps.

Charge to the Task Force

The order creating the Task Force set out several objectives as its charge:
- Meet periodically to assess the progress of implementation.
- Prioritize the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations and strategies.
- Identify recommendations and strategies to be implemented and the best methods for implementation.
- Develop an implementation plan, to include phases for implementing the prioritized recommendations and strategies.
- Seek the guidance of the Advisory Council, as needed.
- Provide periodic updates to the Advisory Council and the Children's Commission.
- Create workgroups, as needed, to carry out the charge.
- At the conclusion of Phase I of the Implementation Plan, provide recommendations to the Children's Commission regarding the need for reauthorization of or changes to the structure or membership of the Task Force.

B. The Advisory Council

The order establishing the Task Force also created an Advisory Council to participate in a consulting role. The Advisory Council members, many of whom served on the Education Committee, also served as champions for the educational needs of foster youth, raising awareness of the *Texas Blueprint*.

Advisory Council Members
- Hon. Patricia Macias, 388th District Court (retired), Chair
- James B. Crow, Executive Director, Texas Association of School Boards
- Carolyne Rodriguez, Senior Director, Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
- Hon. Cheryl Shannon, 305th District Court
- Commissioner John J. Specia, Jr., Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Dr. Johnny L. Veselka, Executive Director, Texas Association of School Administrators
- Commissioner Michael L. Williams, Texas Education Agency

The Task Force provided a written progress update to the Advisory Council in December 2013, the half-way point of Phase I of *Texas Blueprint* implementation. Task Force members also provided periodic updates to members of the Children's Commission between December 2012 and December 2014.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Recommendations Prioritized

At one of its first meetings, members of the Task Force discussed and prioritized over 125 *Texas Blueprint* recommendations. Task Force members acknowledged the difficulty in comparing the many critical issues facing children and youth in foster care, but through a survey they were able to prioritize several goals:

- Increase foster care capacity across school districts;
- Identify and support school district foster care liaisons;
- Support timely enrollment when children initially enroll or change school placements;
- Address over and underrepresentation in Special Education;
- Improve decisions regarding keeping children in their schools of origin;
- Address the issue of lost credits; and
- Improve education decision-making.

Members of the Task Force recognized that the majority of the issues listed above fell within the scope of school stability or training and affected children in grades Kindergarten through 12 ("K-12"). The Task Force also identified data exchange and information sharing as another high priority area. Although Task Force members acknowledged the need for improvement regarding special education, post-secondary and other education challenges, ultimately these issues affected smaller populations of youth in care in comparison to data, school stability, and training.

B. Workgroups Established

The Task Force established three workgroups to focus on policy and practice initiatives in the areas of data exchange and information sharing, school stability, and training and resources.
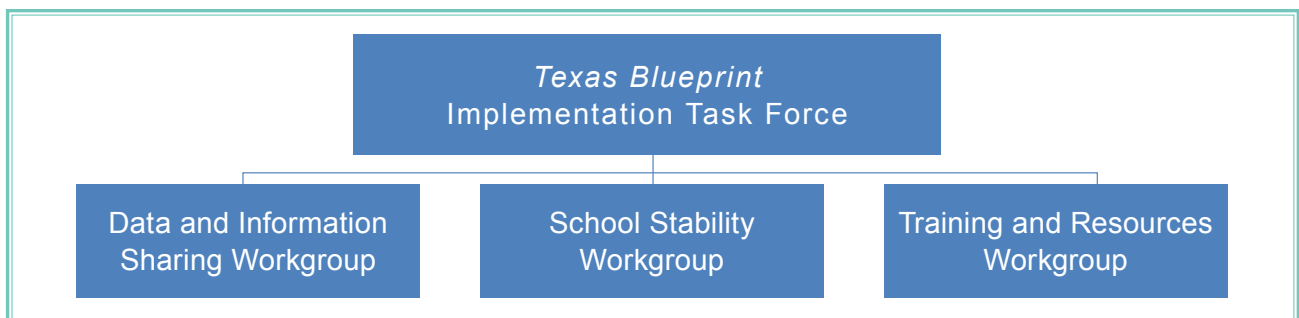
The three workgroup chairs represented stakeholder groups involved in the Task Force: 1) Julie Wayman, TEA, chaired the Data and Information Sharing Workgroup; 2) Joy Baskin, TASB, and Jenny Hinson, DFPS, chaired the School Stability Workgroup; and 3) Sarah Abrahams, Casey Family Programs, followed by Judge Cathy Morris, Child Protection Court of South Texas, chaired the Training Workgroup. Workgroup membership was also multi-disciplinary.[2]

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[2] A workgroup member list can be found at **Appendix B**.

C. Measurement Tools and Accountability

The Task Force adopted a charter to define the purpose and scope of its work and to measure progress made towards implementation. The Task Force used an implementation plan to track progress made towards the goals of the *Texas Blueprint*, provide guidance within each workgroup about how to move forward, and document the activities of each workgroup and Task Force meeting.[3]

Each workgroup developed action plans that included relevant *Texas Blueprint* recommendations. The Data and Information Sharing, School Stability, and Training and Resources Workgroups regularly reviewed and modified these action plans to prioritize implementation, chart progress, and measure the results of the collaboration.
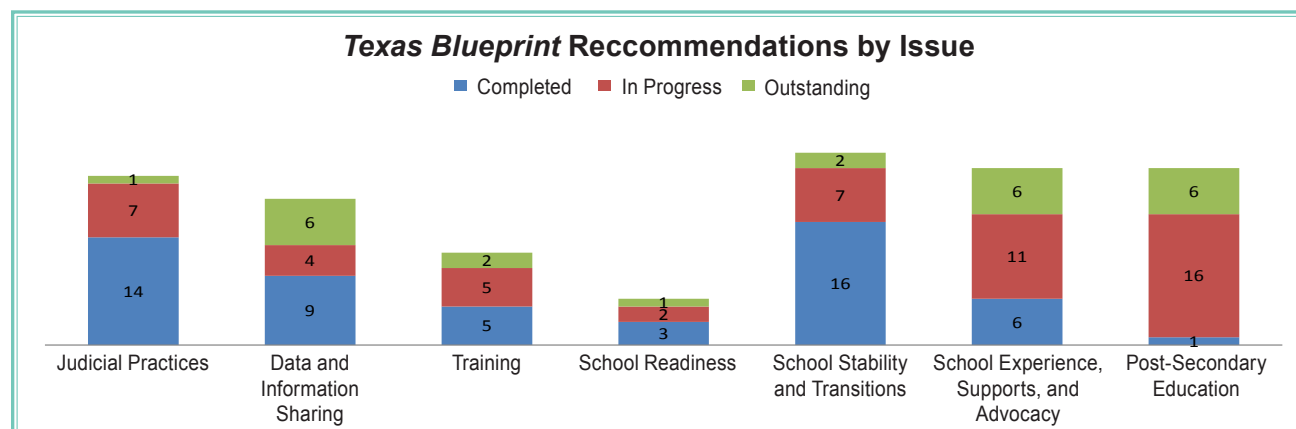
III. TEXAS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Status of *Texas Blueprint* Recommendations

The *Texas Blueprint* included 129 recommendations and in August 2013, the Task Force approved the addition of another recommendation: "develop understanding of the mechanics of TEA and DFPS agency data systems, including structure, data input, why collected, use of data, access to data, and other relevant aspects." This addition brought the number of specific recommendations resulting from the *Texas Blueprint* to a total of 130.
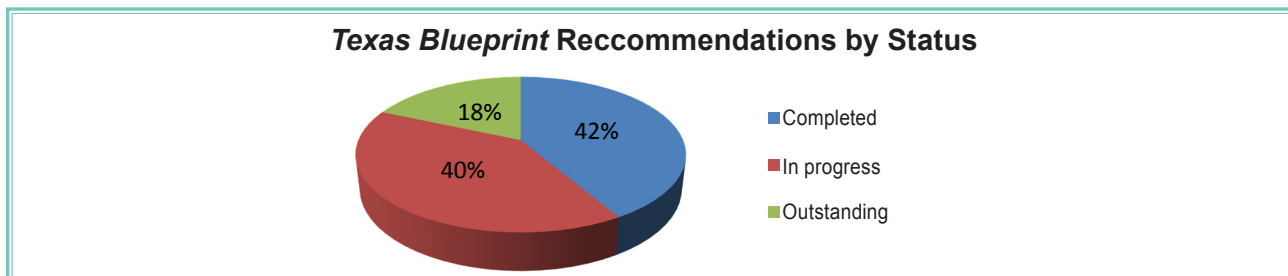
The *Texas Blueprint* recommendations were broken down into the following categories: 1) Judicial Practices; 2) Data and Information Sharing; 3) Multi-disciplinary Training; 4) School Readiness; 5) School Stability and Transitions; 6) School Experience; and 7) Post-secondary Education.

In order to assess the progress of implementation, Children's Commission staff members reviewed the 130 recommendations and assigned one of three statuses to each: "Completed" (no further work required to meet the spirit of the recommendation), "In Progress" (if work had been initiated to implement the recommendation, this status was assigned regardless of the amount of work accomplished), or "Outstanding" (little to no work initiated to address the recommendation).

Texas Blueprint Reccommendations by Issue
■ Completed ■ In Progress ■ Outstanding

Category	Completed	In Progress	Outstanding
Judicial Practices	14	7	1
Data and Information Sharing	9	4	6
Training	5	5	2
School Readiness	3	2	1
School Stability and Transitions	16	7	2
School Experience, Supports, and Advocacy	6	11	6
Post-Secondary Education	1	16	6

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[3] The final Phase I Implementation Plan is attached as **Appendix C**.

As an example, this chart shows that of the 22 Judicial Practices recommendations, 14 were marked as "Completed", 7 as "In Progress", and 1 as "Outstanding". Overall, 106 of 130 recommendations were labeled as "Completed" or "In Progress". In other words, since the *Texas Blueprint* was released in May 2012, 82% of the recommendations have been addressed in whole or in part.

***Texas Blueprint* Reccommendations by Status**

- 42% Completed
- 40% In progress
- 18% Outstanding

Although the *Texas Blueprint* was intended to provide a roadmap, it was not meant as a prescriptive or rigid document. Accordingly, some recommendations were marked as "Completed" if the goal of the recommendation was accomplished through alternative means to what was originally contemplated. For example, the *Texas Blueprint* included a judicial practice recommendation for development of a stand-alone court order to outline the rights and duties of education decision makers, but the goal of this recommendation was accomplished when DFPS created Education Decision Maker Form 2085-E, addressed more fully below.

The *Texas Blueprint* report bore fruit far beyond its recommendations; stakeholders continue to innovate and implement new ideas to promote better educational outcomes of foster youth. One example is the comprehensive Success in Schools program initiated by Friends of Wednesday's Child in response to the *Texas Blueprint* and in recognition of the need for additional educational support for children in foster care in North Texas.

This is tremendous progress, but it is only the beginning. Future efforts will include focusing on post-secondary education, school experience, and school transitions.

B. Highlights from Task Force and Workgroup Accomplishments

Rather than list all the deliverables of the Task Force and the Data and Information Sharing, School Stability, and Training and Resources Workgroups, key accomplishments are categorized as either Legislative, Training, Tools, Data Exchange, and Agency or Organizational Resources.
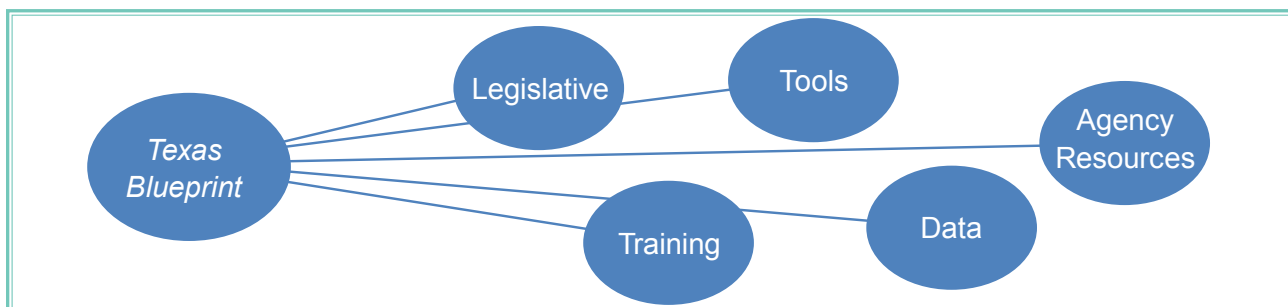
1. Legislative

During the 83rd Texas Legislative Session in 2013, four significant bills were passed to address school outcomes of students in foster care: House Bill 2619 and Senate Bills 832, 833, and 1404. A number of the provisions in these bills reflected recommendations from the *Texas Blueprint* and included several important changes to the laws governing Texas child welfare and education agencies. These provisions:

- Amended the Texas Family Code to require court consideration of educational needs and goals during Permanency and Placement Review Hearings.
- Amended the Texas Family Code to require attorneys and guardians ad litem to be knowledgeable about children's educational needs and goals.
- Added a section to the Texas Family Code requiring DFPS to notify courts, schools, and others about the identity of the Education Decision Maker. As a result, DFPS created form 2085-E that contains fields to designate each child's Education Decision Maker ("EDM"), details when education decision-making rights may be delegated, and provides information on whom the school should contact when education issues arise. Additionally, schools are required to provide notice to both the child's EDM and caseworker regarding events that may significantly impact the education of the child.
- Required TEA to add an indicator code in its Public Education Information Management System ("PEIMS") to identify children in foster care.
- Required TEA to develop policies regarding the award of partial credit to students in foster care.
- Amended the Texas Education Code to expand the duty to appoint a foster care liaison to open-enrollment charter schools and requiring both school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to report the identities of foster care liaisons to TEA.
- Amended the Texas Education Code to make consistent language requiring 10 days to transfer records of youth in care; the Code previously required 14 days for students in foster care and 10 days for the general student population.
- Amended the Texas Education Code to address school absences due to court-ordered appointments and activities related to Child Protective Services ("CPS") cases.
- Amended the Texas Education Code to strengthen the transition supports that are provided to students including:
  - Developing procedures to allow a student who was previously enrolled in a course required for graduation the opportunity, to the extent practicable, to complete the course at no cost to the student before the beginning of the next school year.
  - Requiring schools to review a student's course accrual and personal graduation plan for any student in substitute care who is not likely to receive a high school diploma before the fifth school year following the student's enrollment in grade nine, as determined by the school district.[4]
  - Ensuring that a student who is in grade 11 or 12 be provided information regarding dual-credit or other courses provided by a public institution of higher education for which a high school student may earn joint high school and college credit.

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[4] Substitute care refers to any child in DFPS conservatorship, whether that child resides with a foster parent, relative, other designated caregiver, in a residential facility, or another living arrangement.

Not only do these changes reflect a heightened awareness about the needs of children in foster care but they also demonstrate Texas' commitment to improving their educational outcomes.

2. Training

Excitement about the *Texas Blueprint* and the desire to improve educational outcomes of students in foster care led to an increase in multi-disciplinary and collaborative trainings.

On February 19-20, 2013, multiple stakeholders came together to attend Texas' first Foster Care and Education Summit ("Education Summit"). Supreme Court of Texas Justice Eva Guzman and DFPS and TEA Commissioners John J. Specia and Michael L. Williams extended a joint invitation to Education Service Center directors from the 20 education regions of Texas, approximately 30 superintendents from school districts identified as having a significant number of students in foster care enrolled in their schools, judges whose jurisdictions correlated with those identified school districts, and a number of DFPS and Texas CASA program staff to attend the Education Summit. Approximately 200 judges, school district and education service center representatives, DFPS and Texas CASA staff, and state level advocates participated in the Education Summit. What Education Summit attendees learned led to increased awareness, a greater number of appointments of school district foster care liaisons, and better local and state-level collaboration.

While the list below is not exhaustive, it represents some of the other collaborative trainings offered to various audiences about the complex issues facing students in foster care:

- July 2012 – "Judicially Led Collaborative to Improve Educational Outcomes for Youth in Care Pushes Systemic Change," National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Annual Conference, New Orleans
- October 2012 – "School District Foster Care Liaison 101," online webinar for school district foster care liaisons by DFPS, TEA, and the Children's Commission
- November 2012 – "School District Foster Care Liaison 201: Understanding Child Protective Services and Court," online webinar for school district foster care liaisons by DFPS, TEA, and the Children's Commission
- January 2013 – "Transforming Education Outcomes for Foster Children," online webinar for Texas CASA by Children's Commission staff
- May 2013 – "Education of Foster Youth – What's Next?," 2013 Child Welfare Judges Conference, San Antonio
- August 2013 – "Enhancing Attorney Advocacy for Well-Being Outcomes for Foster Children," National Association of Counsel for Children, Atlanta
- February 2014 – "Continuous Quality Improvement for Courts and Child Welfare: Collaboration to Improve Outcomes," national online webinar by DFPS, TEA, and the Children's Commission
- June 2014 – "Do You Know Who Is Authorized To Make Education Decisions for the Kids on Your Docket?," Disability Rights Texas, Child Welfare Judges Conference, Bastrop

- July 2014 – "Education Issues for Students in Foster Care," TASB Summer Leadership Institute, San Antonio and Fort Worth
- August 2014 –"Response to Intervention and Students in Foster Care: What Service Providers Need to Know," online module by The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, The University of Texas at Austin
- September 2014 – "ABCs of Special Education Law," Surrogate Parent training online webinar for Texas CASA by Disability Rights Texas
- Various Dates – TEA presentations at the Education Reach for Texans convening and Texas Women's University Strengthening Children and Family Connections through Collaboration Conference, Association for Compensatory Educators of Texas Fall Conference, Texas GEAR UP State Conference, Statewide Parental Involvement Conference, Title III Symposium, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Directors meeting, Education Service Center ("ESC") PEIMS Spring/Fall Training, various ESC regions, and others.

3. Tools

Several useful informational tools were implemented within the last two years to better inform and provide guidance to multiple stakeholders about the intersection of education and foster care. Many tools were developed though a dynamic collaborative process to ensure that the information disbursed was accurate and fairly represented the roles of various individuals involved in the life of a child in foster care. Although the tools were developed for a particular stakeholder group, the products were often appropriate for use by larger, multi-disciplinary audiences:

- Foster Youth Education Judicial Checklist[5]
- Education chapter in the Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book[6]
- TEA Foster Care and Student Success web page[7]
- *Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide* produced by Texas Trio project partners for education stakeholders about foster care[8]
- Children's Commission Education website[9]
- DFPS intranet education web page for caseworkers and other staff
- Texas CASA Education Advocacy Toolkit to be released in early 2015
- Back to School - New Legislation and Resources to Help Improve Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care (Jurist in Residence Letter sent to judges responsible for CPS cases)[10]

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[5] Children's Commission, Foster Youth Education Judicial Checklist (2014), available at http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/17149/Education%20Judicial%20Checklist.pdf.

[6] Children's Commission, Bench Book (2013), available at http://benchbook.texaschildrenscommission.gov/library_item/gov.texaschildrenscommission.benchbook/139.

[7] TEA, Foster Care and Student Success web page, http://tea.texas.gov/index4.aspx?id=2147512292&menu_id=2147483761%20. Last visited 02/12/15.

[8] TEA, Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide, available at http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf. Last visited 02/12/15.

[9] Children's Commission Education website, http://education.texaschildrenscommission.gov/.

[10] Children's Commission, Jurist in Residence "Back to School Letter," available at http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/17566/25%20Back%20to%20School.pdf.

- DFPS Kinship Quarterly and Education Newsletters identified key education resources, tips, and reminders for kinship caregivers and caseworkers[11]
- Getting Ready for School Letter also sent from DFPS to Child Placing Agencies to share with children's caregivers[12]
- "To the Administrator Addressed" Letters issued by TEA that are relevant to this work, addressing: 1) Attendance, Admission, Enrollment Records and Tuition, August 2012; 2) Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting and Requirements, March 2013; 3) Foster Care Awareness Month, May 2013; 4) Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, July 2014; and 5) Foster Care and Student Success – Committed to Improving the Education of Students in Foster Care, September 2014[13]

4. Data Exchange

TEA and DFPS have exchanged data regarding students in foster care pursuant to an MOU since 2010, but through the work of the Task Force, have taken the exchange to a new level by collaborating to establish baseline data and exchange more detailed information. Two national programs, the Casey Family Programs Shared Learning Collaborative and the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform Information Sharing Certificate Program, selected Texas teams to participate in programs aimed at enhancing the exchange of aggregate data between TEA and DFPS. These programs also accelerated progress towards a more intricate data exchange, including the amendment of the existing MOU to allow for greater flexibility in data exchange.

TEA collects student-level data from Texas school districts and acquires data on students in foster care from DFPS. On a yearly basis, DFPS provides child-level data to TEA and TEA performs a data match to ascertain, on an aggregate level, how students in foster care are faring educationally. The most recent data exchange between TEA and DFPS contains information from the 2012-2013 school year.

Additionally, TEA and DFPS have engaged in extensive cross-system collaboration to formulate the exchange of very detailed information about subsets of the population of students in foster care. These subsets are referred to as cross tabs. For example, the baseline data shows the percentage of children in foster care and all students statewide who receive an out of school suspension ("OSS"). By comparison, one cross tab file for discipline actions includes the percentage of children in foster care who receive an OSS and disaggregates the data by race/ethnicity, program, grade, living arrangement, legal status, and child abuse or neglect allegation. Together, they provide a better picture of how specific populations of youth in care are doing in school. The following is a discussion of a deeper analysis of the aggregate data exchanged between the agencies.

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[11] DFPS Kinship Quarterly and Education Newsletters (2014), available at http://education.texaschildrenscommission.gov/resources.aspx.
[12] Id.
[13] TEA, "To the Administrator Addressed" Letters related to students in foster care, available collectively at http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/laws/. Last visited 02/12/15.

a. Establishing a Baseline

Ideally, the 2012-2013 data will serve as a baseline to measure whether efforts underway in Texas have impacted school outcomes of youth in care as several significant events occurred in Texas shortly before, during, and immediately after the conclusion of this particular school year. Specifically, the Foster Care and Education Summit was held (February 2013), the *Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide* was released and disseminated to education and child protection stakeholders (August 2013), the law requiring the creation of a PEIMS code for students in foster care went into effect (September 2013), an Education Decision Maker form was developed to provide schools and others of the identities of persons responsible for making education decisions for youth in care (September 2013), and numerous training opportunities and resources were developed and held across the state during and after the 2012-2013 school year.
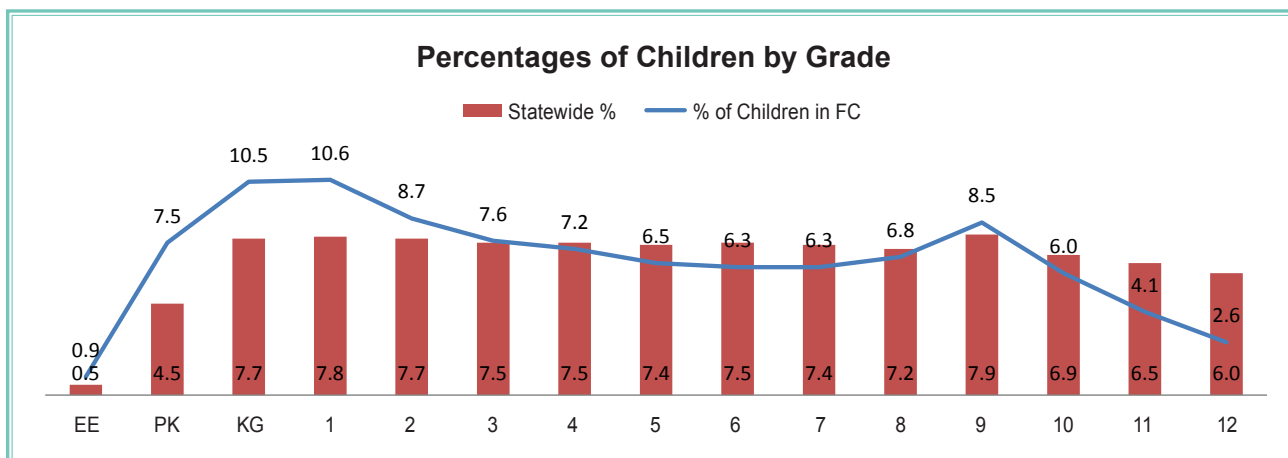
Because the 2012-2013 data is a baseline, the direct impact of the aforementioned events can only provide context for school outcomes of children in foster care at this time. The baseline figures are valuable in analyzing trends in the data going forward and in strategizing how to effectively implement statewide initiatives. The data also empowers stakeholders to assess the educational outcomes of students in care in Texas rather than relying on national estimates.

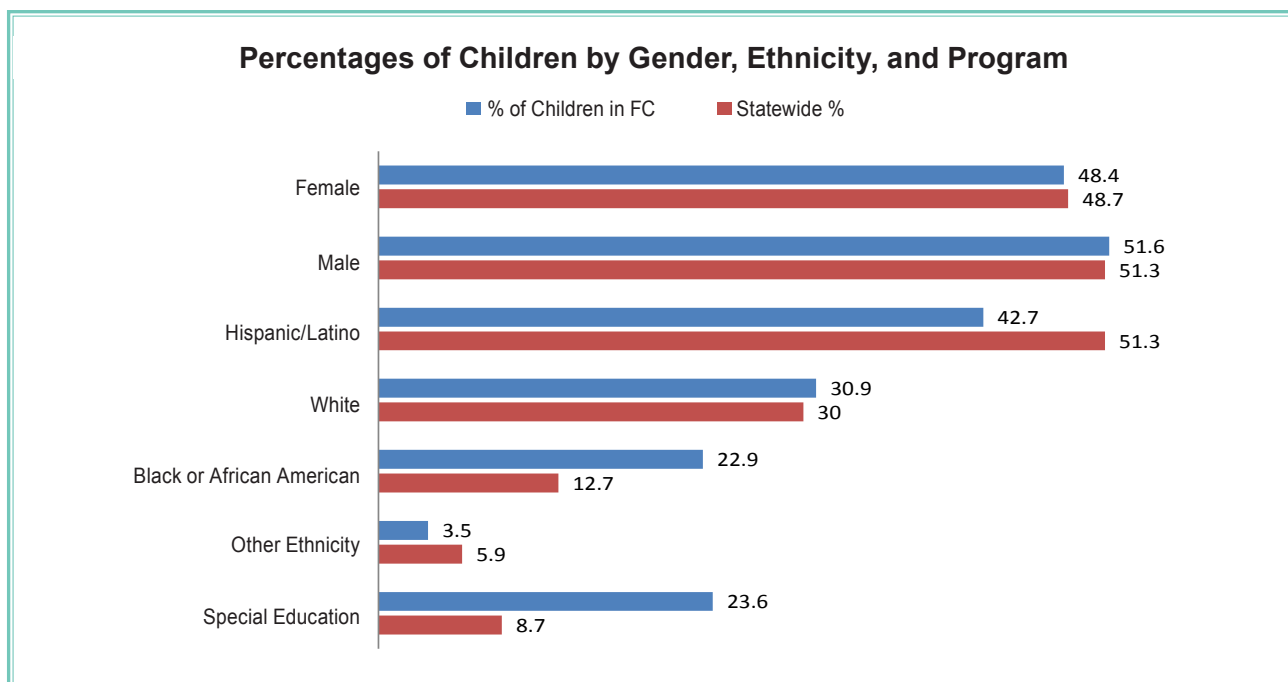### b. Total Population of Students in Foster Care in Texas Public Schools

To be considered as a student in foster care for the purposes of the DFPS – TEA data exchange, a child must be in DFPS conservatorship for 14 or more days during the school year. Each child in foster care who met that criterion and attended school for at least one day over the course of the school year was counted once, with the total count of children in foster care attending school during the 2012-2013 academic year equaling 23,326.

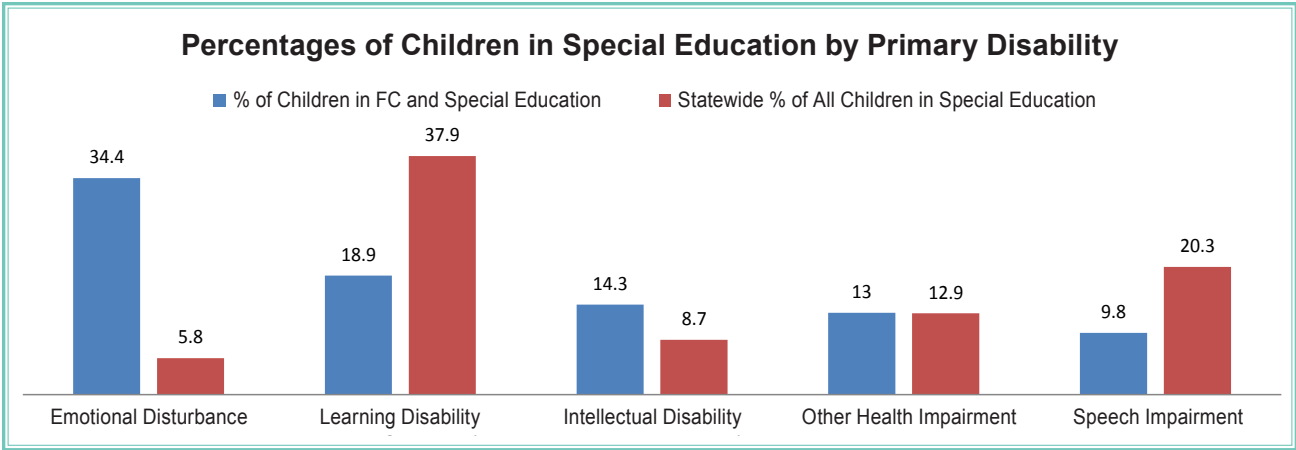### c. Grade, Gender, Ethnicity, and Program

For reporting purposes, TEA uses a snapshot approach to capture data on one particular day of the school year, which is the last Friday in October. TEA information in this report about grade, gender, race/ethnicity, and educational program reflect the data for each student who was enrolled in the Texas public schools on this snapshot date and in foster care at some point during the 2012-2013 school year, even if the child was not in foster care on the snapshot date. The percentages that resulted from that data match are included in the tables below for comparison between children in foster care and all children statewide in the Texas public schools.

Percentages of Children by Grade

Statewide % — % of Children in FC

	EE	PK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
% of Children in FC	0.9	7.5	10.5	10.6	8.7		7.2	6.5	6.3	6.3	6.8	8.5	6.0	4.1	2.6
Statewide %	0.5	4.5	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.2	7.9	6.9	6.5	6.0

This information reveals that with the exception of the 9th grade, the percentage of students in foster care is higher for the Early Education, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades. In fact, about 38% of students in foster care are in 2nd grade or below. Although it is important to address the needs of all children in foster care, these data will help inform outreach and interventions.

Percentages of Children by Gender, Ethnicity, and Program

■ % of Children in FC   ■ Statewide %

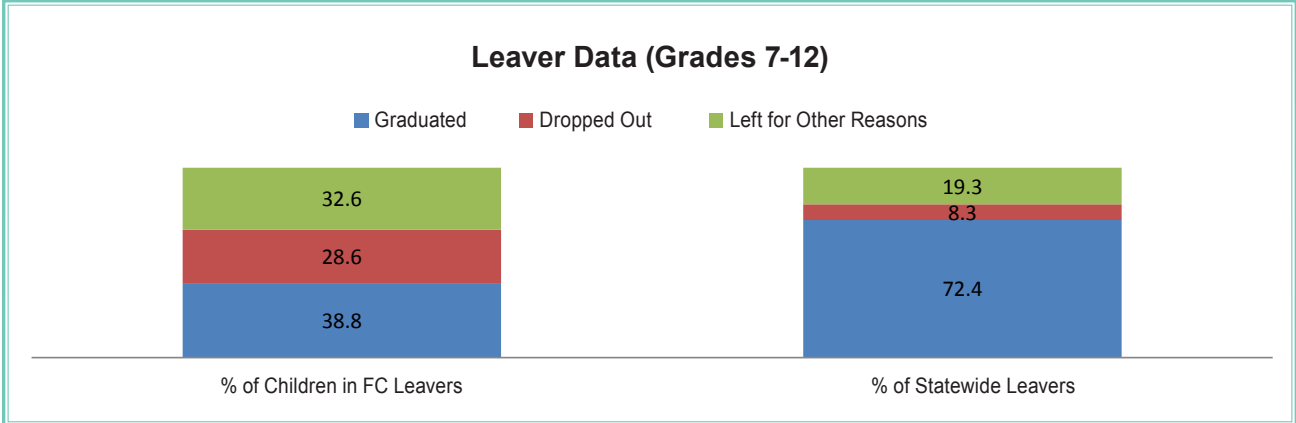|	% of Children in FC	Statewide %
Female	48.4	48.7
Male	51.6	51.3
Hispanic/Latino	42.7	51.3
White	30.9	30
Black or African American	22.9	12.7
Other Ethnicity	3.5	5.9
Special Education	23.6	8.7

The comparisons between children in foster care and all students statewide are similar based on gender and most ethnic classifications. However, 22.9% of students in foster care are classified as Black or African American compared to 12.7% of the statewide population, which is important to note as Texas works to address the disproportionate representation of Black or African American children in foster care. Additionally, a child in foster care is also almost three times more likely to receive special education services in comparison to all students.

Percentages of Children in Special Education by Primary Disability

■ % of Children in FC and Special Education   ■ Statewide % of All Children in Special Education

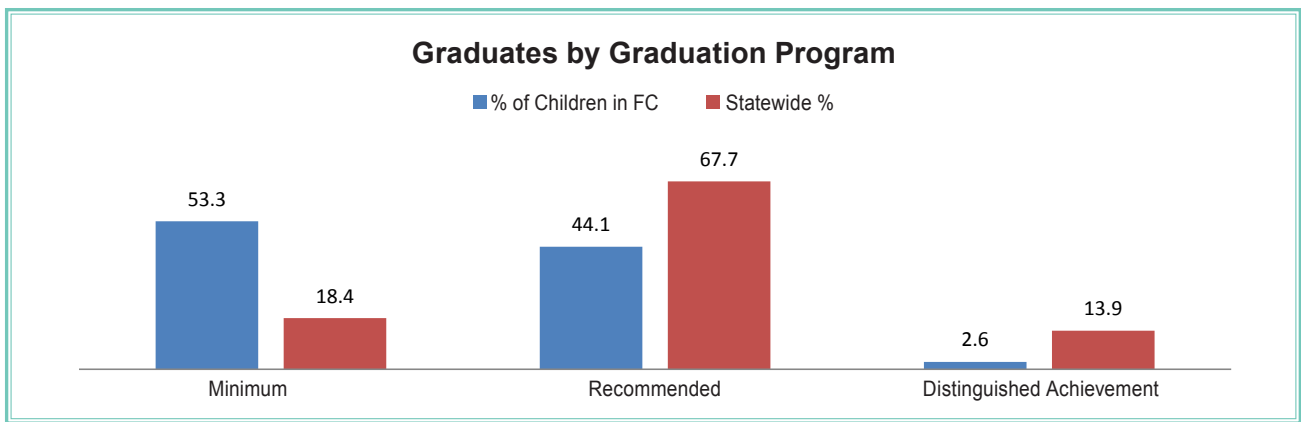| Disability	% of Children in FC and Special Education	Statewide % of All Children in Special Education
Emotional Disturbance	34.4	5.8
Learning Disability	18.9	37.9
Intellectual Disability	14.3	8.7
Other Health Impairment	13	12.9
Speech Impairment	9.8	20.3

A significant number of children in foster care who receive special education services are classified with emotional disturbance as the primary disability. Traumatic life experiences such as removal from the home, the abuse or neglect that led to the child entering care, and changing schools may impact learning, behavior, mental health, and the child's school experience. Courts, DFPS, and educators alike should be cognizant of the number of students in foster care who receive special education services.

d. Leaver Data and Graduation Program

The 2012-2013 school year data exchange also demonstrated reasons that students left school, also known as "leaver" status. The graduated and dropped out leaver percentages do not represent graduation or dropout rates. Instead, these figures represent the number of students whose leaver status was graduated or dropped out during the year divided by the total number of leavers for that school year.

Leaver Data (Grades 7-12)

■ Graduated   ■ Dropped Out   ■ Left for Other Reasons

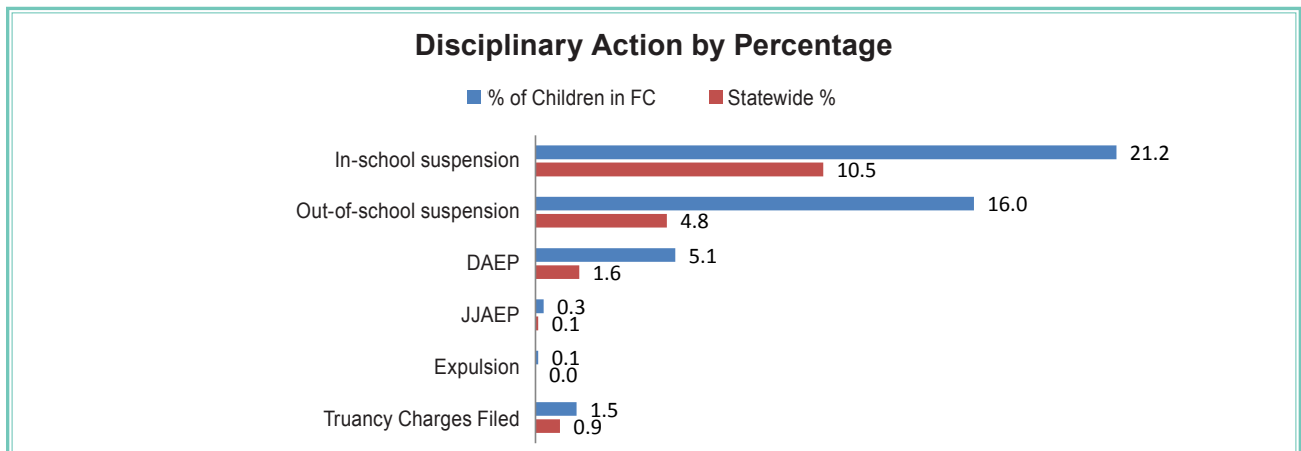|	Graduated	Dropped Out	Left for Other Reasons
% of Children in FC Leavers	38.8	28.6	32.6
% of Statewide Leavers	72.4	8.3	19.3

The leaver data demonstrates that of the students who left school, statewide 72.4% left because they graduated whereas only 38.8% of children in foster care left school because they graduated. The lower percentage of students in foster care in grade 12, compared to all students statewide, also contributes to the lower percentage of graduates in foster care. On the other hand, 28.6% of children in foster care left school because they dropped out compared to the much smaller figure of 8.3% of students statewide who left school because they dropped out.

Graduates by Graduation Program

■ % of Children in FC ■ Statewide %

	Minimum	Recommended	Distinguished Achievement
% of Children in FC	53.3	44.1	2.6
Statewide %	18.4	67.7	13.9

The data also provide a breakdown of the percentage of students by graduation program.[14] Although this information is an improvement from previous years, still over 50% of children in foster care followed the graduation program with minimal requirements in the 2012-2013 school year, whereas 67.7% of the statewide population followed the recommended graduation program.[15]

e. Discipline

Exchanged data also provided important information about the disciplinary outcomes of children in foster care.

Disciplinary Action by Percentage

■ % of Children in FC ■ Statewide %

	% of Children in FC	Statewide %
In-school suspension	21.2	10.5
Out-of-school suspension	16.0	4.8
DAEP	5.1	1.6
JJAEP	0.3	0.1
Expulsion	0.1	0.0
Truancy Charges Filed	1.5	0.9

The figures listed above represent the percentage of the total foster care and statewide populations who were subject to disciplinary action. If a child had two in-school suspensions ("ISS"), he or she was counted once within the ISS category, but if the child had one ISS and one OSS action, he or she was counted once in both categories. One example from the data, 21.2% of children in foster care had at least one in-school suspension compared with 10.5% of the statewide population in the 2012-2013 school year. The percentage of students with an out-of-school suspension was 16% for children in foster care, over three times the amount of students statewide with at least one out-of school suspension.

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[14] Graduation programs include breakdowns by academic discipline and total credits to keep students on track for graduation. For more information, see TEA State Graduation Requirements, available at http://tea.texas.gov/graduation.aspx. Last visited 02/12/15.

[15] Passage of HB 5 in 2013, however, significantly changed graduation requirements. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, all entering freshman are scheduled to graduate on the new Foundation Program. Students who entered grade nine prior to the 2014-2015 school year have the option to graduate on the minimum, recommended, advanced/distinguished, or foundation program.

f. School Moves By Living Arrangement

As mentioned above, subsets of data, referred to as cross tabs, provide a more nuanced picture of the school outcomes of children in foster care. One cross tab example is a breakdown of the school moves by living arrangement. School districts record the child's last living arrangement of the fiscal year or the child's living arrangement when the child left foster care. In measuring school moves, it is important to note that the data are measured in terms of campuses attended, not moves. Thus, if a child changes from School A to School B and back to School A, the child's data is measured as attending two campuses, which may not accurately reflect all school changes during the academic year.

School Moves for Children in Foster Care by Living Arrangement (percentages)
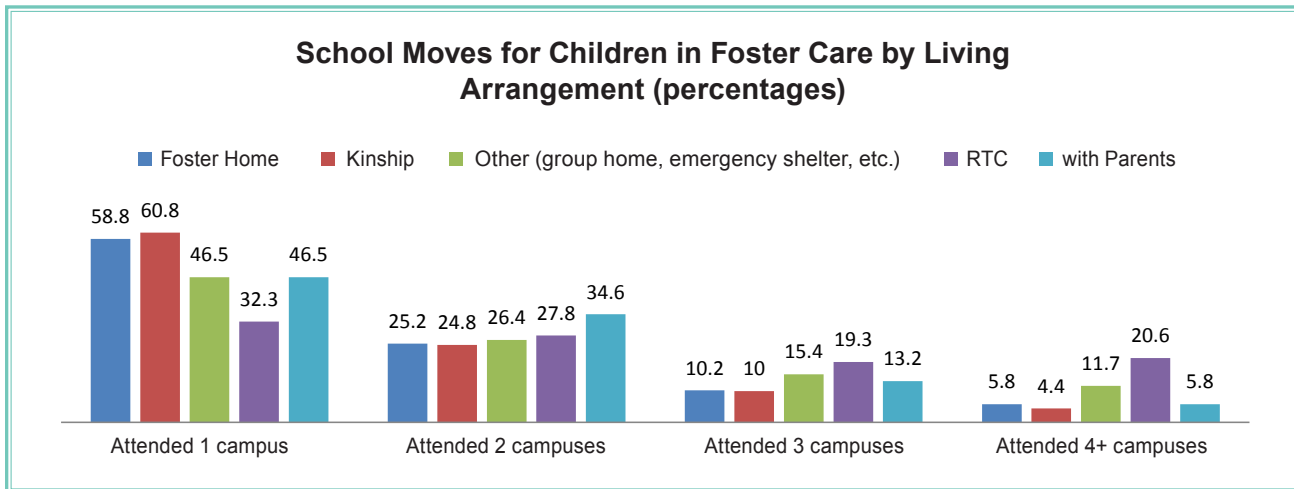
Significantly, this chart shows that approximately 60% of children in conservatorship living in a foster home or with kin attended one campus during the 2012-2013 school year. In contrast, 68% of children in foster care placed in a Residential Treatment Center attended more than one campus. Notably, 20.6% of children in residential treatment centers attended four or more campuses.

The exchange of more meaningful data will continue to inform all stakeholders about the best use of resources and the need for more targeted interventions moving forward.

5. Agency or Organizational Resources

One particularly striking change brought about as a result of the *Texas Blueprint* was the commitment of resources, particularly personnel, on the part of partner agencies involved in this initiative, which elevated the message that education of children in foster care is a top priority. Some examples include:

- DFPS devoted significant staff time at the state and regional level and made substantive changes to its policy and practices regarding education of students in foster care. The agency modified its court report template to require CPS caseworkers to include more information about the education status of children in care. DFPS also changed its policy and residential contracts to require caretakers (if licensed foster placements) or CPS caseworkers (if the child was living

with non-licensed placements) to withdraw students in care from school upon a change in school placement to ensure that school records transfer more quickly. In addition, each child's Education Portfolio now includes a section for Pre-K records. DFPS is also in the process of updating its education policy to address the issues raised by the Education Committee and *Texas Blueprint* Task Force.

- DFPS created form 2085-E to relay information about the Education Decision Maker and Surrogate Parent to courts, interested persons, and schools.

- TEA dedicated a half of a full time-equivalent for a Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, who is making great strides to raise awareness of the unique needs and challenges of students in care within the education agency and among education stakeholders. TEA included a lesson on students in foster care in Texas' Online College and Career Readiness Support Center.[16] Excused absences for attendance at court-ordered activities in CPS cases were also included in the TEA Student Attendance Accounting Handbook as of fall 2013. Additionally, information on students in DFPS Managing Conservatorship is included in the PEIMS Data Standards,[17] annually in TEA's Attendance, Admission, Enrollment, Records and Tuition "To the Administrator Addressed" letter, and on TEA's Foster Care and Student Success webpage.

- TEA incorporated the foster care liaison position into the Ask Texas Education Directory system to support tracking and collection of the foster care liaison requirement, while also providing an avenue for people to find and download this information. As of January 2015, over 1,000 of 1,265 school districts and open-enrollment charter schools have at least one liaison appointed.

- TASB devoted significant time and resources to partnering with other education and child welfare stakeholders. This involvement helped to raise awareness among school officials about the unique needs of students in foster care and facilitated communication between local school boards and the state education agency.

- Texas CASA hosted online webinars regarding education and developed its Education Advocacy Toolkit for its volunteers to more effectively interact with schools and advocate for their clients.

- The Children's Commission hired a full time staff attorney whose principal focus is the improvement of educational outcomes of children in foster care and *Texas Blueprint* implementation. The Children's Commission Assistant Director also dedicated a portion of time to education issues.

IV. INPUT ABOUT NEXT PHASE OF IMPLEMENTATION

A. Lessons Learned from Phase I

The close of Phase 1 offered an opportunity for the Task Force and workgroup members to discuss the progress made to-date, challenges and successes during the Phase I implementation period, and the future of *Texas Blueprint* implementation.

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[16] TEA, Online College and Career Readiness Support Center website, available at http://www.txccrsc.org/occrrc/. Last visited 02/12/15.
[17] TEA, PEIMS Data Standards, available at http://tea.texas.gov/index4.aspx?id=25769817517. Last visited 02/12/15.

1. Challenges

The American Bar Association Legal Center for Foster Care and Education provided valuable technical assistance to the Data Workgroup and there was concern among Data Workgroup members that without this assistance, progress would slow. The School Stability and Training Workgroups both recognized that their assigned topics were perhaps too large and complicated to address in such a short period of time. The School Stability Workgroup decided in the latter half of Phase I to organize its meetings by topic, but this happened late in the process and left the workgroup with little time to follow up on issues identified during the topic discussions. The Training Workgroup determined that training needs on multiple topics for various stakeholders were extensive and that perhaps the workgroup needed to develop a comprehensive plan to map training needs in the state.

The Task Force members agreed with the concerns of the workgroups and also noted that involvement of some members in multiple workgroups proved challenging to resource allocation. The Task Force also observed the lack of ongoing involvement of youth currently or formerly in care on the Task Force and two of the workgroups. The Task Force and all of the workgroups agreed that due to the breadth of issues addressed, a more in-depth focus on collaborative issues such as enrollment, transportation, and post-secondary education was lacking in Phase I of implementation. On a similar note, some members gave feedback that it would be better to complete projects one at a time instead of working on multiple projects at the same time. Stakeholders also commented that there was an underrepresentation of rural areas among workgroup members and that perhaps meetings should occur outside Austin to promote greater collaboration statewide.

Supporting three workgroups and a Task Force, such as scheduling meetings, preparing materials for notebooks, and creating minutes, also proved challenging on occasion. A less formal structure could alleviate some of these administrative demands.

2. Successes

Workgroup and Task Force members agreed that collaboration was essential to the implementation process. Representation from a variety of perspectives enriched the conversation and kept the focus on practical solutions. The existence of the Task Force, along with regular meetings and reports from the workgroups, kept projects on schedule and maintained momentum at a statewide level. Workgroup and Task Force members appreciated quarterly, in-person meetings because they kept decision makers informed about one another's progress and helped resolve any obstacles to moving forward. The Task Force also noted the accomplishment of a number of projects related to the *Texas Blueprint*, as discussed above, which it considered to be a success.

B. Outstanding Issues for Phase II

In the process of evaluating Phase I, the Task Force and workgroups identified many issues to possibly address during Phase II. First, the work of data exchange and information sharing for

students in grades K-12, although collaborative and robust in nature, must continue. With DFPS and TEA exchanging more detailed data pursuant to an amended MOU, ongoing collaboration will be crucial as the agencies move towards a joint analysis of that data and production of a shared report.

The issues concerning school stability and school enrollment certainly merit further attention, as well. School transitions are extremely complicated and the issues surrounding enrollment, credit transfer and recovery, withdrawal, and transportation all require a closer look.

It is clear that resource development regarding post-secondary opportunities is also a high priority. Ideally, the work that has been done with the K-12 population can be built upon to address the needs of older youth in care or formerly in care. This could include increased data exchange between DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, training on the state's Education Training Voucher and state college tuition and fee waiver, and more campus supports in higher education communities for youth formerly in care.

Other issues that are still outstanding and might be addressed in Phase II or III include:

- School Readiness;
- School Discipline;
- Special Education; and
- Fostering Local Collaboration.

V. TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Sustain Momentum and Accountability

Recommendation: Create a Standing Foster Care and Education Committee of the Children's Commission, of a Duration to be Determined by the Children's Commission, to Meet Quarterly, Approve Education-Related Initiatives, and Monitor Progress on Collaborative Projects.

Within the last four years, the momentum has grown in Texas through the formation of the Education Committee, creation of the *Texas Blueprint*, and the dedicated work of the Task Force and its workgroups. One long-term goal of the *Texas Blueprint* was the institutionalization of the collaboration and the commitment to the improvement of educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care. The work is at a stage where long-term commitment is achievable, but focus must be maintained and supported. For these reasons, the Task Force recommends that the Children's Commission create a standing Foster Care and Education Committee ("Committee"). The Committee would function in a similar manner to the other standing committees of the Children's Commission, including reporting regularly to the Children's Commission. The Committee would meet on a quarterly basis from July 2015 to December 2016 to monitor several long-term objectives recommended by involved stakeholders and approved by the Committee. The duration of the Committee would be indefinite or

until the Children's Commission determines the Committee would no longer be necessary, based on the recommendations of the Committee in December 2016.

Recommendation: Encourage Cross-System, Multi-Disciplinary, and Diverse Membership from Child Welfare, Education, Youth, and Advocacy Stakeholders on the Foster Care and Education Committee.

The Task Force recommends representation among the following stakeholders on the Committee:

- Judges handling CPS cases from a variety of jurisdictions
- DFPS legal and program staff
- TEA
- TASB
- Texas CASA
- Others as identified by the Chair of the Committee, such as a representative of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Association of School Administrators, the Texas Homeless Education Office, school personnel, the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, an attorney who represents parents or children in child abuse and neglect proceedings, a youth formerly in care, a parent or parent advocate, an early childhood education stakeholder, and/or a representative of a child placement organization

As mentioned above, it would be ideal to have representation of both rural and urban areas to address the needs of foster children throughout the state.

B. Committee Objectives and Issues to Consider

If approved by the Children's Commission, the Committee would need to define the scope of its work. The Task Force makes the following suggestions to the Committee when determining the focus of its work in Phase II of *Texas Blueprint* implementation.

1. *Define a Shared Mission of the Foster Care and Education Committee that Clarifies the Committee Objectives and Develops a Working Structure.*

The Task Force proposes the following objectives for the Committee:

- Promote collaboration across systems.
- Meet at least quarterly to monitor goals and projects.
- Prioritize strategies to improve the educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care.
- Identify the best methods of implementation of the prioritized objectives.
- Develop a measurement tool to monitor deliverables and track progress.
- Provide updates at the Children's Commission quarterly meetings.

- Create workgroups, as needed, to carry out its charge.
- Provide additional recommendations in December 2016 about the need for the Committee to continue.

Although these are general goals for the Committee, the Committee should review these objectives and determine whether further goals are also appropriate.

2. Appoint Workgroups, Design Focus Groups and/or Bring Together Subject Matter Experts on Defined Strategic Projects, as Needed.

There are several issues that should be addressed in the next phase of implementation. Post-secondary education, school discipline, school readiness, and local collaboration are all areas where there is a need for the continued attention of key decision-makers. For example, the Committee might create a workgroup to develop a model for collaboration on a local level. The committee might set an ideal timeframe, project goals, and monitor progress at its quarterly meetings. The workgroup might include subject matter experts and meet as often as necessary and in whatever locations convenient to its members. While flexibility will allow workgroups to operate independently and with greater focus, the existence of the Committee will ground the projects and maintain momentum. The Task Force also recommends that the Committee have discretion to prioritize these issues and pursue projects based on available resources and expertise.

3. Evaluate Key Priorities and Efficient Use of Resources on a Yearly Basis but Continue Data and Information Sharing Workgroup until all Major Data-related Objectives are Met.

Although barriers to data exchange and information sharing were identified and addressed in Phase I of Implementation, the Task Force members recommend the continuation of the Data Workgroup. Under the Committee, the Data Workgroup can analyze a more robust data exchange and work collaboratively with child welfare and education agencies to make findings about the data and issue a joint report. Analysis of the data from multiple perspectives will lead to a more meaningful understanding of the issues that affect the education of foster youth. This will certainly inform which interventions are necessary to improve educational outcomes and where to implement them.

4. Ensure a Continued Focus on Training and School Stability Issues as Part of Committee Projects, as Needed.

Workgroup and Task Force members agreed that training and school stability are still key priorities. Without a focus in these two areas, it would be nearly impossible to improve educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care. Although the Training and School Stability Workgroups were very productive in Phase I, workgroup members felt that the subject area was too broad. As a result, the Task Force recommends a more detail-oriented and project-based approach in Phase II. For

instance, an Enrollment Workgroup consisting of registrars and other school records experts might gather information about enrollment best practices and develop a model enrollment chart or welcome packet for students in foster care.

5. ***Explore the Impact of Foster Care Redesign and its Rollout Throughout the State on the Educational Stability of Children in Foster Care.***

One stated intent of Foster Care Redesign, as initiated by the Public Private Partnership, is to alleviate poor educational outcomes and additional trauma caused by multiple moves.[18] In Phase II of *Texas Blueprint* implementation, the Committee could explore the impact of Foster Care Redesign on education outcomes. Through a closer analysis of lessons learned and progress made across the state, best practices and solutions should be considered in areas that have experienced less educational stability for children in foster care.

VI. CONCLUSION

Two years into the implementation of the *Texas Blueprint*, over 80% of the recommendations are either completed or in progress. Although this is tremendous progress that could not have been made without collaboration and partnership across the judicial, child welfare, and education systems, there is a continued need for stakeholders to work together to develop solutions and improve educational outcomes for children in foster care. If its recommendations are adopted, the Task Force believes the momentum behind this initiative will continue and Texas will see improved educational outcomes of students in care.

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[18] Foster Care Redesign is statewide effort to change the way DFPS contracts with foster care providers based on geographic area. For more information, see: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/adoption_and_foster_care/about_foster_care/redesign.asp. Last visited 02/12/15.

APPENDIX A

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

Misc. Docket No. 12- **9214**

ORDER ESTABLISHING
TEXAS BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE OF
PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

On May 20, 2010, this Court established the Education Committee of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission). In May 2012, the Children's Commission Education Committee issued its final report, *Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care.* As outlined in the *Texas Blueprint*, the report contains many recommendations to improve education outcomes through legislative, policy, and practice changes regarding judicial practices, data and information sharing, multi-disciplinary training, school readiness, school stability and transitions, school experience, and post-secondary education.

With the submission of the *Texas Blueprint,* the Education Committee fulfilled the charge given to it by this Court, but the formation of the Education Committee itself was only the first step in our state's efforts to collaboratively work to improve education outcomes of children and youth in foster care. The Education Committee, recognizing this need, recommended the creation of a Task Force to monitor the implementation of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations and to further collaboration between court, education, and child welfare stakeholders in Texas. The development of the implementation task force will be critical to ensuring that the spirit of the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations will be realized.

The Court **HEREBY ORDERS**:

1.   The Education Committee of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families has met the charge issued to it in the *Order Establishing the Education Committee of Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families,* and is hereby discharged of any further responsibilities as a committee.

2.   The *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Task Force is created to oversee implementation of the *Blueprint* recommendations.

3.   The Implementation Task Force shall:

- Meet periodically to assess the progress of implementation.
- Prioritize the *Texas Blueprint* recommendations and strategies.
- Identify which recommendations and strategies are to be implemented and the best methods for implementation.
- Develop an implementation plan, which shall include phases for implementing the prioritized recommendations and strategies.
  - Phase I: Short-term goals
  - Phase II: Intermediate goals
  - Phase III: Long-term goals
- Seek the guidance of the Advisory Council, as needed.
- Provide periodic updates to the Advisory Council and the Children's Commission.
- Create workgroups, as needed, to carry out its charge.
- At the conclusion of Phase I of the Implementation Plan, the Task Force shall provide recommendations to the Children's Commission regarding the need for reauthorization or changes to the structure or membership of the Task Force.

4.   The membership of the Implementation Task Force shall include:

- Hon. Rob Hofmann, Child Protection Court of the Hill Country, Mason
- Hon. Alyce Bondurant, Child Protection Court of North Texas, Wichita Falls
- Sarah Abrahams, Casey Family Programs
- Joy Baskin, Texas Association of School Boards
- Cathy Cockerham, Texas CASA
- Lori Duke, Clinical Professor, Children's Rights Clinic, UT School of Law, Austin
- Jenny Hinson, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
- Julie Wayman, Texas Education Agency
- Others as identified by the Chair of the Implementation Task Force, including a representative of the Texas Association of School Administrators, an attorney who represents parents in child abuse and neglect proceedings, a youth formerly in foster care, and a representative of a child placement organization.

The Implementation Task Force shall be chaired by the Honorable Rob Hofmann, Education Committee member and Judge, the Child Protection Court of the Hill Country, Mason.

5.   The members of the Implementation Task Force shall serve for a period of two years, unless further order is issued by this Court.

6.   The Implementation Task Force shall be supported by guidance from an Advisory Council comprised of former members of the Education Committee or their successors, and shall include:

- Hon. Patricia Macias, 388th District Court, El Paso
- Hon. Cheryl Shannon, 305th District Court, Dallas
- Commissioner John J. Specia, Jr., Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Commissioner Michael Williams, Texas Education Agency
- James B. Crow, Executive Director, Texas Association of School Boards
- Dr. Johnny L. Veselka, Executive Director, Texas Association of School Administrators
- Carolyne Rodriguez, Casey Family Programs
- Vicki Spriggs, Texas CASA
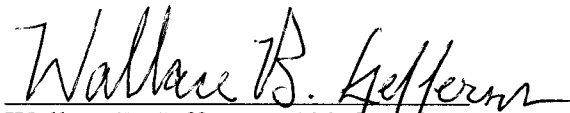
The Advisory Council shall be chaired by the Honorable Patricia Macias, 388th Judicial District Court, El Paso.
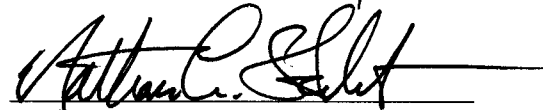
The purpose of the Advisory Council shall be to serve as a consultative body for the Implementation Task Force. It will not hold periodic meetings but will be consulted as necessary by the Task Force. The advisory council shall:

- Raise awareness of the *Texas Blueprint* and the importance of improving education outcomes of children and youth in foster care.
- Champion the issue within their respective agencies and disciplines.
- Use its expertise to assist the Implementation Task Force.
- Receive periodic updates from the Implementation Task Force.
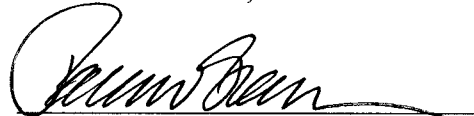
The advisory council shall remain in effect for the duration of the Implementation Task Force or as otherwise directed by the Court.
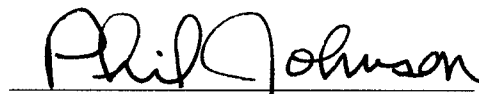
SIGNED this 11th day of December, 2012.

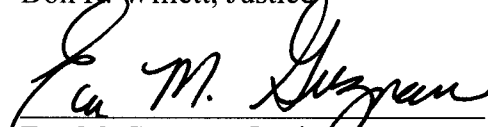_Wallace B. Jefferson_
Wallace B. Jefferson, Chief Justice

Nathan L. Hecht
Nathan L. Hecht, Justice
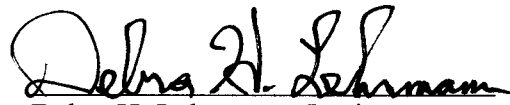
_____
David M. Medina, Justice
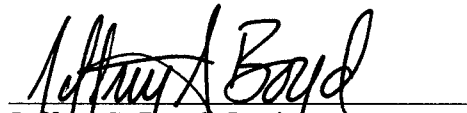
Paul W. Green
Paul W. Green, Justice

Phil Johnson
Phil Johnson, Justice

Don R. Willett
Don R. Willett, Justice

Eva M. Guzman
Eva M. Guzman, Justice

Debra H. Lehrmann
Debra H. Lehrmann, Justice

Jeffrey S. Boyd
Jeffrey S. Boyd, Justice

APPENDIX B

Workgroup Member List

The Data and Information Sharing Workgroup

- **Julie Wayman (Chair)**, Director of Dropout Prevention and At-Risk Programs, Texas Education Agency
- **Tymothy Belseth**, Education and Training Voucher Program and Lead Alumni Specialist, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Denise Brady**, Child Protective Services Senior Policy Attorney, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Brock Boudreau**, Research and Evaluation, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Dr. Jane Burstain**, Senior Policy Analyst, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Dr. Vivian Dorsett**, President, Texas Foster Care Alumni Association
- **Dr. Monica Faulkner**, Associate Director, Child and Family Research Institute, The University of Texas at Austin
- **Ashley Harris**, Child Welfare Policy Associate, Texans Care For Children
- **Hon. Kevin Hart**, Judge, South Plains Child Protection Court
- **Jenny Hinson**, Child Protective Services Division Administrator for Permanency, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Kelly M. Kravitz, MPSA**, Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, Division of Federal and State Education Policy, Texas Education Agency
- **Laura Marra**, Project Coordinator, Child and Family Research Institute, School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin
- **Montgomery Meitler**, Assistant Counsel / Confidentiality Officer, Office of Legal Services, Texas Education Agency
- **Jon Olson**, State Disproportionality Specialist, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- **Jeanne Stamp**, Senior Program Coordinator, The Texas Homeless Education Office, The Charles A. Dana Center, The University of Texas at Austin
- **Nina Taylor**, Director, Information Analysis Division, Texas Education Agency
- Technical Assistance Advisor: **Kathleen McNaught**, Assistant Director, American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law, Legal Center on Foster Care and Education

The School Stability Workgroup

- **Joy Baskin (Co-Chair)**, Director, Legal Services Division, Texas Association of School Boards
- **Jenny Hinson (Co-Chair)**, Child Protective Services Division Administrator for Permanency, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

- **Edna Ramon Butts**, Director, Intergovernmental Relations and Policy Oversight, Foster Care Liaison, Austin Independent School District
- **Lance Campbell**, Superintendent, Lone Oak Independent School District
- **Irene Clements**, President, Texas Foster Family Association
- **Hon. Richard Garcia**, Associate Judge, Children's Court, Bexar County
- **Kim Gibbons**, Child Protective Services Projects Program Specialist, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Amy Kinkade**, Former Principal, Matthews Elementary School, Austin Independent School District
- **Kelly Kravitz**, Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, Division of Federal and State Education Policy, Texas Education Agency
- **April McWilliams**, Youth Advocate, Child Protective Services Specialist II – Family Based Safety Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Beverly Nelson**, Region 3 Education Specialist, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

The Training and Resources Workgroup

- **Hon. Cathy Morris (Chair)**, Judge, Child Protection Court of South Texas
- **Sarah Abrahams (Chair until October 2013)**, Systems Improvement Analyst, Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
- **Pam Bell**, Program Director, Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, The University of Texas at Austin
- **Sherry DiMarco, LCSW**, Social Worker/At-Risk Specialist, Region 13 Education Service Center
- **Lori Duke**, Attorney at Law, Clinical Professor, Children's Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law
- **Maria Estella Garza**, Senior Coordinator, Family and Student Support Services, Social Work, Homelessness and Foster Care, San Antonio Independent School District,
- **Denise Jackson**, Training and Outreach Manager, Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates
- **Bruce Kendrick**, Executive Director, Embrace Texas
- **Kelly Kravitz**, Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, Division of Federal and State Education Policy, Texas Education Agency
- **Kelly Louis**, Child Protective Services Curriculum Developer, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Kris Mohajer**, State Education Program Specialist, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Cecilia Ojeda-Collins**, Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence Training Development Specialist V, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- **Leslie Palmer,** Training Manager, Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates

Texas Blueprint Phase I Implementation Plan
December 2014

Texas Blueprint Implementation Task Force Members

- **Hon. Rob Hofmann, Chair,** 452nd Judicial District Court, Mason
- **Joy Baskin,** Texas Association of School Boards, Austin
- **Hon. Alyce Bondurant,** North Texas Child Protection Court, Wichita Falls
- **Edna Butts,** Austin Independent School District, Austin
- **Cathy Cockerham,** Texas CASA, Austin
- **Lori Duke,** Children's Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin
- **Maya Guerra Gamble,** Attorney at Law, Austin

- **Jenny Hinson,** Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
- **Hon. Cathy Morris,** Child Protection Court of South Texas, Boerne
- **Wanda Peña,** Casey Family Programs, San Antonio
- **Michael Redden,** New Horizons, Abilene
- **Jessica Sheely,** foster youth alumna, Austin
- **Ian Spechler,** Disability Rights Texas, Austin
- **Julie Wayman,** Texas Education Agency, Austin

Charge to Implementation Task Force

- Meet periodically to assess the progress of implementation.
- Prioritize the Texas Blueprint recommendations and strategies.
- Identify which recommendations and strategies are to be implemented and the best methods for implementation.
- Develop an implementation plan, which shall include phases for implementing the prioritized recommendations and strategies.
  - Phase I: Short-term goals
  - Phase II: Intermediate goals
  - Phase III: Long-term goals
- Seek the guidance of the Advisory Council, as needed.
- Provide periodic updates to the Advisory Council and the Children's Commission.
- Create workgroups, as needed, to carry out its charge.
- At the conclusion of Phase I of the Implementation Plan, the Task Force shall provide recommendations to the Children's Commission regarding the need for reauthorization or changes to the structure or membership of the Task Force.

Objective	Responsible Person / Entity	Completion Date	Benchmark
1. Meet periodically to assess progress of implementation			
• January 8, 2013 • April 3, 2013 • June 5, 2013 • August 16, 2013 • December 6, 2013 • April 21, 2014 • September 18, 2014 • December 12, 2014	Task Force	December 2014	Task Force met 8 times during duration
2. Prioritize the *Texas Blueprint* Recommendations			
• Survey developed to assist Task Force members in prioritizing recommendations • Task Force members complete survey • Survey results analyzed for presentation to Task Force members	Task Force	March 2013	Task Force reviewed and prioritized recommendations Survey developed, completed, and reviewed to prioritize recommendations
3. Identify recommendations and strategies to be implemented and the best methods for implementation			
• Task Force meets, analyzes, and discusses survey results • Task Force determines recommendations and strategies to be implemented • Task Force determines need for workgroups regarding prioritized recommendations and strategies	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Task Force members met and prioritized recommendations, as evidenced in Implementation Plan
4. Develop an implementation plan, which shall include phases for implementing the prioritized recommendations and strategies			

Objective	Responsible Person / Entity	Completion Date	Benchmark
• Children's Commission staff drafts implementation plan and circulates for approval of Task Force • Upon completion of first meetings of workgroups, implementation plan updated and finalized	Task Force	First version completed May 3, 2013; updated version approved September 27, December 6, 2013, April 14, September 18, and December 12, 2014	Implementation plan drafted and approved by Task Force
5. Seek the guidance of the Advisory Council, as needed	Task Force	April 3, 2013 and ongoing	Task Force determined when appropriate to seek guidance of Advisory Council
6. Provide periodic updates to the Advisory Council and the Children's Commission	Task Force	Ongoing; reports made to Children's Commission on: January 11, May 3, and September 27, 2013. March 28, May 16, September 19, 2014. Report made to Advisory Council in December 2013.	Task Force Chair or Children's Commission staff provided update to Children's Commission at every scheduled Commission meeting; Task Force Chair provided update to Advisory Council as deemed appropriate
7. Create workgroups, as necessary, to carry out charge			

• Task Force determines number, subject matter, and leadership of workgroups
  ○ **School Stability**
    ■ Chairs: Joy Baskin, Jenny Hinson
  ○ **Training**
    ■ Chair: Judge Cathy Morris
  ○ **Data**
    ■ Chair: Julie Wayman
	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Workgroups and leadership determined

Objective	Responsible Person / Entity	Completion Date	Benchmark
• Workgroup composition determined	Workgroup chairs	June 1, 2013	Workgroup composition determined

• Workgroup meetings
  ○ **School stability**
    ■ July 29, October 30, 2013. January 13, January 27, April 14, September 5, 2014.
  ○ **Training**
    ■ July 9, August 29, November 1, 2013. February 3, May 6, September 8, 2014.
  ○ **Data**
    ■ July 24, October 10, 2013. February 28, May 27, August 26, November 11, 2014.
	Workgroup members	Ongoing; First meeting by no later than July 31, 2013	Workgroup meetings held

8. Provide recommendations to the Children's Commission regarding: • **The need for reauthorization or changes to the structure or membership of the Task Force** • **Phases II and III of the implementation process**	Task Force	February 27, 2015	Task Force provided written report regarding the progress of the Task Force and recommendations to the Children's Commission regarding the need for reauthorization or changes to the structure or membership of the Task Force, including need for Phase II of Implementation
9. School Stability Workgroup			
• Task Force identifies chairs, Joy Baskin and Jenny Hinson	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Workgroup chairs identified

• Task Force identifies subject matter of workgroup:
  ○ Increase foster care capacity across school districts
  ○ Implement and support House Bill 826 ISD liaisons
  ○ Support timely enrollment when children initially enroll or change school placements
  ○ Improve decisions regarding keeping children in their school of origin
  ○ Address issue of lost credits
	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Subject matter of workgroup identified

Objective	Responsible Person / Entity	Completion Date	Benchmark
• Chairs of Workgroup determine membership of workgroup	Joy Baskin, Jenny Hinson	June 1, 2013	Workgroup members identified
• Chairs of Workgroup determine meeting schedule for workgroup and begin holding meetings	Joy Baskin, Jenny Hinson, Children's Commission staff	July 29, 2013 and ongoing as determined by workgroup	Workgroup meetings held
• Workgroup determines objectives and tasks	Workgroup	July 29, 2013	Objectives and tasks added to School Stability Workgroup Action Plan
• Workgroup reports progress to Task Force	Joy Baskin, Jenny Hinson	Ongoing; reports due to Task Force during periodic meetings	Workgroup chairs provided oral updates to Task Force during periodic meetings
• Workgroup provides recommendations, as necessary, regarding subject matter, including need to continue consideration of subject matter after conclusion of Task Force	Workgroup	By no later than December 1, 2014	Workgroup developed written recommendations, as necessary
10. Training Workgroup			
• Task Force identifies chair, Judge Cathy Morris	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Workgroup chair identified

• Task Force identifies subject matter of workgroup:
 	
  ○ **Training**
    ■ Improve judicial training and resources
    ■ Expand training and resources for child caregivers and child welfare stakeholders
    ■ Enhance training available to schools
  ○ **Other Resources**
    ■ Develop and amass content for Children's Commission education website
    ■ Use existing stakeholder resources to promote training and raise awareness
	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Subject matter of workgroup identified

Objective	Responsible Person / Entity	Completion Date	Benchmark
• Chair of Workgroup determines membership of workgroup	Judge Cathy Morris	June 1, 2013	Workgroup members identified
• Chair of Workgroup determines meeting schedule for workgroup and begins holding meetings	Judge Cathy Morris, Children's Commission staff	July 9, 2013 and ongoing as determined by the workgroup	Workgroup meetings held
• Workgroup determines objectives and tasks	Workgroup	July 9, 2013 and ongoing as necessary	Objectives and tasks added to Training and Resources Workgroup Action Plan
• Workgroup reports progress to Task Force	Judge Cathy Morris	Ongoing; reports due to Task Force during periodic meetings	Workgroup chairs provided oral updates to Task Force during periodic meetings
• Workgroup provides recommendations, as necessary, regarding subject matter, including need to continue consideration of subject matter after conclusion of Task Force	Workgroup	By no later than December 1, 2014	Workgroup developed written recommendations, as necessary
11. Data Workgroup			
• Task Force identifies chair, Julie Wayman	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Workgroup chair identified
• Task Force identifies subject matter of workgroup: ○ Better understand the collection, organization, and application of data within agencies ○ Perfect and expand the routine exchange of aggregate data between agencies to determine how children in foster care fare educationally and to evaluate improvement in those education outcomes over time ○ Improve child-specific information sharing to ensure that all agencies and stakeholders have the necessary information to serve the education needs of children in foster care	Task Force	April 3, 2013	Subject matter of workgroup identified

Objective	Responsible Person / Entity	Completion Date	Benchmark
• Chair of Workgroup determines membership of workgroup	Julie Wayman	June 1, 2013	Workgroup members identified
• Chair of Workgroup determines meeting schedule for workgroup and begins holding meetings	Julie Wayman Children's Commission staff	July 24, 2013 and ongoing as determined by workgroup	Workgroup meetings held
• Workgroup determines objectives and tasks	Workgroup	July 24, 2013 and ongoing as determined by workgroup	Objectives and tasks added to Data Workgroup Action Plan
• Workgroup reports progress to Task Force	Julie Wayman	Ongoing; reports due to Task Force during periodic meetings	Workgroup chairs provided oral updates to Task Force during periodic meetings
• Workgroup provides recommendations, as necessary, regarding subject matter, including need to continue consideration of subject matter after conclusion of Task Force	Workgroup	By no later than December 1, 2014	Workgroup developed written recommendations, as necessary