

10 THINGS EDUCATORS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

1

Children and youth in foster care have many strengths: They are often extremely resilient and effective advocates for themselves and others. They benefit when their strengths are recognized, nurtured, and supported.

2

Maintaining confidentiality and sensitivity is valued and appreciated: Children and youth, in foster care, may prefer their teachers and other students do not know they are in care. They are well-aware of the associated stigma. Follow the lead of your student about if/how they want to be identified.

3

Students in foster care are a mobile population: Due to circumstances beyond their control, students may frequently move to new homes, communities, and/or schools. These transitions often happen quickly. They may not be able to say “goodbye” to their friends and teachers, contributing to additional loss and academic, social, and emotional challenges.

4

Students often have gaps in their education: Some students, in foster care, are not at age-appropriate grade level for a variety of reasons. Frequent school moves, delays in transferring educational records between schools, and loss of course credits contribute to these gaps.

5

Children and youth with disabilities account for at least 40 – 47 % of children in foster care: These students need extra support to overcome barriers to academic success, high school graduation, access to college and employment as adults.

6

Students in foster care may have inappropriate special education or mental health diagnosis: Information about special education/mental health diagnosis and IEPs may be lost due to frequent moves. It's critical to review special education/mental health diagnosis to ensure they are accurate and interventions are appropriate!! Empower caregivers and students by helping them understand the diagnosis, how it impacts the student's educational needs, and services available.

7

Students in foster care want to have a sense of agency: They benefit from being included in decision making, goal setting, and discussions about them. This helps build self-determination, which will help them overcome challenges they encounter.

8

Many professionals are involved in the lives of students in foster care: A Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworker, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or guardian ad litem, an attorney ad litem, and others are likely involved in the case. Some of these professionals may contact you to get educational information regarding the student. Working together as a team greatly benefits the student.

9

Federal and state legislation supports students in foster care: Students in foster care are protected by laws regarding immediate enrollment, school stability, and maintaining school placement. Your district may have a designated foster care liaison that can help coordinate child welfare and educational services. Your administrator should know who this is.

10

Children and youth in foster care want to be treated like your other students: Schools can provide a sense of normalcy and an escape from challenges they are facing in their home life.

Resources

Harwick, R., Tyre, A., Beisse, K. & Thomas, C. (2015). Intervention Targets for Youth with Disabilities in Foster Care. School Psychology Forum. (9)1, 5-20

The Texas Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide:
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>