



Senate Education Committee
February 18, 2020

Beverly Mortimer
Senior Vice President of Programming

Chair Baumgardner, Vice Chair Alley, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Committee:

My name is Beverly Mortimer, and I am Senior Vice President of Programming for Jobs for America's Graduates- Kansas (JAG-K). Thank you for asking me to give my perspective on academic programs of youth in foster care. My perspective has evolved through my professional growth during my 33-year career in public education as a classroom teacher, principal and superintendent of schools. But my perspective has become a priority since I began my programming work with JAG-K in 2016. Evidence at the state and national level provide evidence of concerns in academic progress for students in foster care.

National Data

- Each time a student in care changes schools the student loses 4-6 months of academic progress. (American Bar Association & Casey Family Programs; Legal Center for Foster Care and Education 2008)
- Students in foster care score 16–20 percentile points below their peers in state standardized testing. (National working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)
- Only 3 percent of children who have been in foster care attend post-secondary education after high school graduation. (National working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)
- Children do not begin school immediately after entering foster care, often because of missing records and gaps in school attendance. Transition time between placements also creates gaps in school attendance. (National working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)

State Data

Performance Data – Level 1 (lowest academic level)

Kansas State Assessments in Math and ELA (English Language Arts) comparison for students in foster care and all students in Kansas.

- Students in foster care score lower than all students in each category at both levels
- Percentage of students in foster care scoring at level 1 has increased in all categories, except grade 3 ELA
- Gap between students in foster care and all students has widened in all categories from 2018 to 2019.
- Gap from grade 3 and HS assessments widens for both math (9.06) and ELA (9.1)
- Subgroup of students if foster care is the highest group “not” tested on Kansas State Assessments at 5.39%. (next highest subgroup is students with disabilities at 2.17%)
- KSDE Graphs attached – show all performance levels

KS State Assessments - Level 1		
	2018	2019
Grade 3 Math		
Foster Care	31.46	40.87
All	18.4	18.24
Gap	13.06	22.63
HS Math		
Foster Care	72.11	72.76
All	44.46	41.07
Gap	27.65	31.69
Grade 3 ELA		
Foster Care	47.05	46.86
All	29.59	28.58
Gap	17.46	18.28
HS ELA		
Foster Care	59.64	61.53
All	33.29	34.15
Gap	26.35	27.38

- Local graduation requirements vary and this the inconsistencies cause additional barriers for students in foster care when they change schools and the requirements change. Students in foster care often lack the KSDE required Individual Plan of Study (IPS), which could be used to ensure continuity as the students move from district to district.
- Kansas State Statute 38-2285 clearly outlines the graduation requirements for students in custody of the Department of Children and Families secretary. However, students must request the diploma, after then turn 17. This is too late for students in foster care who change schools on a regular basis, with each school changing requirements and the lack of an official (and enforced) IPS.
- Graduation rate of Kansas students in foster care – 44% (DCF, April 2019) (attached)
- Kansas has the highest number of youth 13-18 in out-of-home placement since FY 2015. (See DCF Chart1.1)

Chart 1.1 KS Department of Children & Families

Number of Youth on DCF Out-of-Home Care				
FY2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY2019
6,517	6,723	7,192	7,588	7,610

Additional Factors to Consider

- The academic challenges for students in foster care is complex and impacted by social and emotional development factors, including experiencing multiple traumatic events.
- Maslow’s Hierarchy applies to youth in foster care, requiring basic needs be met to address the academic progress, which supports and requires systems collaboration.
 - Physical needs
 - Sense of safety
 - Feeling Connected
 - Self-respect & confidence
 - ACADEMIC LEARNING
- Every child impacted by trauma becomes a safety issue, they will fight, they need to feel safe, they will be defiant and avoid shame at any cost for survival. (Heather T. Forbes, “Help for Billy”)

What trauma looks like in our schools:

 - Poor attendance
 - Academic struggle
 - Become disengaged
 - Disruptive behavior
 - Begin to disconnect
 - Lose a sense of HOPE
- Increasing school discipline incidents (suspensions/expulsions) interrupt school attendance. (Data for all students) (See KSDE Chart 1.2)

Chart 1.2 Kansas State Department of Education

Student Count Total - Illicit Drugs, Alcohol, Weapons, Violent Incidents				
	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
ISS	3769	3364	2613	2409
OSS	9644	9695	9321	8563
Exp.	159	165	176	127
Other	63	92	182	42
Total	13627	13314	12200	11138
ISS - In-School Suspension of at least one day				
OSS - Out-of-School Suspension of at least one school day				
Exp. - Expulsion of at least one school day				
Other - Other removals include outcomes such as death, withdrawal, or incarceration				

Conclusion

The performance data for students in foster care cited in national studies and KSDE assessment scores clearly show the students in foster care deserve better. More students in foster care subgroup score in the lowest performance category for math and ELA in Kansas. The numbers of students in foster care has been increasing, the academic assessment scores decline, and the graduation rate decreasing. This does not paint a hopeful future for thousands of children in the foster care system in Kansas. It is commonly known that prevention is more cost-efficient and more effective than intervention. Education is vital to the economic health of our state, it is time to change the trajectory for our students in foster care. This narrative, from “The Children’s Reading Foundation, Third Grade Reading Success Matters,” provides a powerful example:

Children from all walks of life must learn to read proficiently. Reading is the most crucial academic skill because it is the foundation for learning. Through third grade children are learning to read; after third grade students read to learn.

Without a strong foundation in reading, children are left behind at the beginning of their education. They lag in every class, year after year because more than 85 percent of the curriculum is taught by reading. And by the end of third grade, 74 percent of struggling readers won’t ever catch up. In fact, one of the most important predictors of graduating from high school is reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

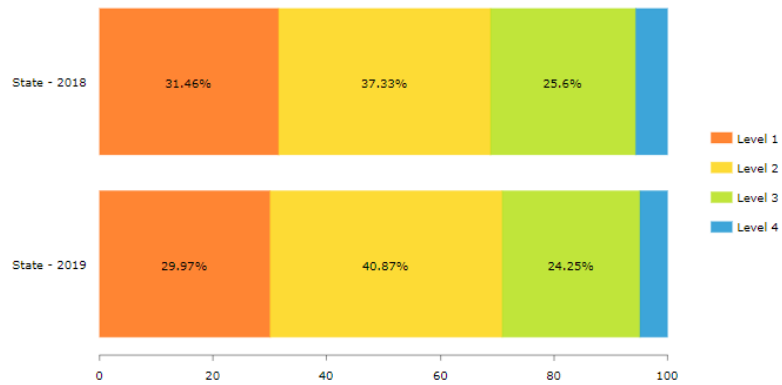
Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the JAG-K Success Academy. I would now be glad to stand for any questions the Committee may have.

(Attachments)

Math Grade 3: 31.46%

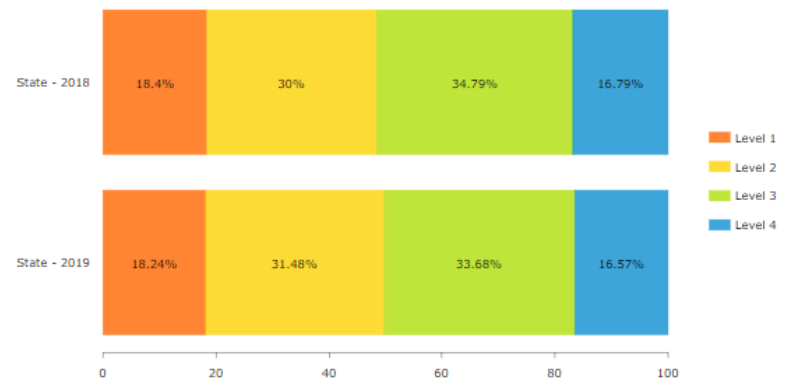
Subject: Math Subgroup: Foster Care Grade Level: 3

*To protect student privacy, when a subgroup has fewer than 10 students the data is not displayed.



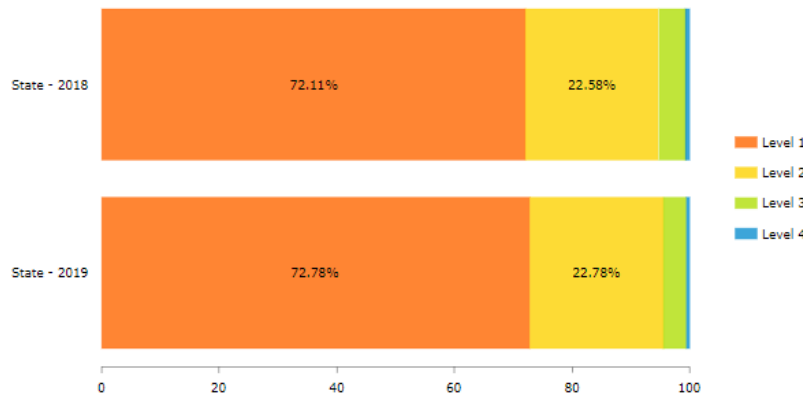
Subject: Math Subgroup: All Students Grade Level: 3

*To protect student privacy, when a subgroup has fewer than 10 students the data is not displayed.



Subject: Math Subgroup: Foster Care Grade Level: HS

*To protect student privacy, when a subgroup has fewer than 10 students the data is not displayed.



Subject: Math Subgroup: All Students Grade Level: HS

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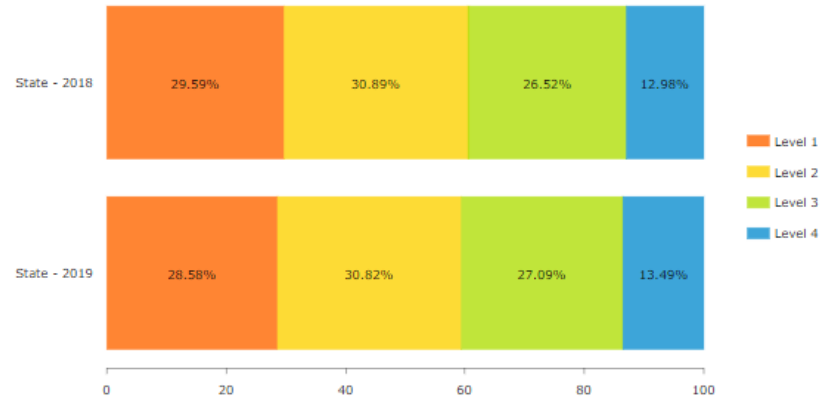
Subject: ELA Subgroup: Foster Care Grade Level: 3

*To protect student privacy, when a subgroup has fewer than 10 students the data is not displayed.



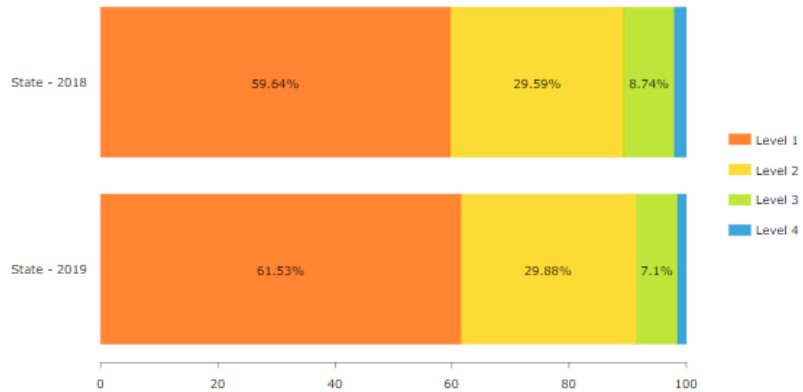
Subject: ELA Subgroup: All Students Grade Level: 3

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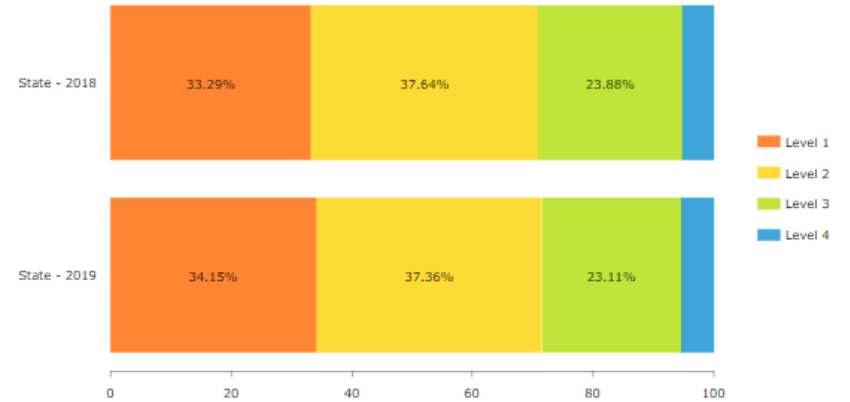
Subject: ELA Subgroup: Foster Care Grade Level: HS

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Subject: ELA Subgroup: All Students Grade Level: HS

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Adults Ending Custody with the Secretary will have Completed Grade 12 SFY2019

July 2018 - April 2019

East Region	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr			YTD Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	8	14	5	5	3	2	5	2	2	2			48
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	10	16	7	7	10	6	10	10	6	9			91
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	80.0%	87.5%	71.4%	71.4%	30.0%	33.3%	50.0%	20.0%	33.3%	22.2%			52.7%

Kansas City Region	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr			YTD Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	3	13	5	3	1	4	3	6	3	2			43
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	6	20	9	6	7	9	4	6	6	4			77
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	50.0%	65.0%	55.6%	50.0%	14.3%	44.4%	75.0%	100.0%	50.0%	50.0%			55.8%

West Region	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr			YTD Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	4	3	2	0	3	5	1	1	1	1			21
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	11	9	7	6	9	8	7	7	2	14			80
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	36.4%	33.3%	28.6%	0.0%	33.3%	62.5%	14.3%	14.3%	50.0%	7.1%			26.3%

Wichita Region	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr			YTD Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	3	7	1	1	0	3	5	0	2	0			22
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	6	13	3	5	1	5	9	5	6	3			56
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	50.0%	53.8%	33.3%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	55.6%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%			39.3%

Statewide	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr			YTD Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	18	37	13	9	7	14	14	9	8	5			134
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	33	58	26	24	27	28	30	28	20	30			304
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	54.5%	63.8%	50.0%	37.5%	25.9%	50.0%	46.7%	32.1%	40.0%	16.7%			44.1%

Numerator: The number of adults ending custody with the Secretary of DCF for reason of Emancipation or Runaway, who have completed the 12th grade.

Denominator: The number of adults ending custody with the Secretary of DCF for reason of Emancipation or Runaway.

Data Source: FACTS