Educational Experiences of Children in Out-Of-Home Care

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INTRODUCTION

Schools are one of the primary institutions shaping the development of children, and successful

school experiences increase the likelihood of their successful transition to adulthood. For youth

in out-of-home care, the state serves *in loco parentis* or in place of the parents, and as such the

state not only represents another institution shaping the development of these children but also

bears responsibility for the educational needs of those children in care. States' performance on

meeting these educational needs is now a part of the federal child and family service review

(CFSR)—an accountability system implemented in 2001that aims to improve child welfare

outcomes.

Findings from the Illinois CFSR, conducted in September 2003, indicate that "Illinois did

not achieve substantial conformity" with well-being outcome WB2: Children receive

appropriate services to meet their educational needs (U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services, March 24, 2004). Offering further support for that CFSR finding, recent research in

Illinois suggests that for youth aging out of foster care, there is a disjuncture between educational

aspirations and current or past educational experiences (Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004). Almost

half of the youth surveyed said they hoped or expected to graduate from college; however, by

self-report, a significant proportion of these youth said they had repeated a grade (35%), received

an out-of-school suspension (69%), or had been expelled from school (18%), and about 10 to 15

percent had failed one of their courses.

This report presents the findings from a study assessing the educational experiences of

youth in out-of-home care in Illinois. There were three components to this study: quantitative

analysis of administrative data, qualitative interviews, and a national search to identify programs

and practices that target the educational needs of children in care. The quantitative analysis

explored academic performance, experiences of school change, and the extent and nature of special education classifications among children in out-of-home care who were enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) relative to other students in CPS. These data also enabled us to examine longitudinal trajectories in academic achievement for these children. The qualitative interviews explored the context and process of some of the educational experiences of children in care. We also reviewed and summarized programs in other states targeting the educational needs of children in foster care. As part of this endeavor, we invited representatives of those programs to join us, along with staff of DCFS and CPS, for a discussion of ways in which efforts to meet the educational needs of children in care might be improved.

This report details the findings from this study and serves two purposes. First, the findings provide a baseline for ongoing assessment and monitoring of the educational experiences of children involved with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Second, the findings provide information useful for targeting and shaping policy and practice designed to improve the educational achievement of children who are involved with the child welfare system in Illinois.

The findings thus far suggest a need to attend to not only educational achievement and outcomes for children in out-of-home care but also the continuity of their school experiences and the connections between the children and both of the organizations or institutions serving them. Significant proportions of these students have low achievement test scores, are being retained, or are dropping out of school before the end of their twelfth grade. Students in care are also likely to attend multiple schools during their time in care. Other evidence presented in this report suggests that there are several factors constraining opportunities for the development of strong working relationships with consistent interactions between school staff and DCFS caseworkers.

The fact that nearly three-quarters of CPS students in care have been in care for 2 or more years highlights the need, responsibility, and opportunity to address the educational needs of these children.

METHODS

The methodology for this study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative components, draws on a variety of timeframes and regions for sampling or selection of data, and employs sophisticated analytic techniques. The following description of the methodology provides an overview of the study structure and also introduces some language that will be used in the discussion of findings. Appendix A, however, provides a comprehensive description of the methodology that will help inform a more critical analysis of this study and its findings.

Quantitative Data

Data Sources and Record Linkage

Quantitative data for this study were pulled from Chapin Hall's Integrated Database on Child and Family Services in Illinois, which contains data from IDCFS's Child and Youth Center Information System (CYCIS) and the Chicago Public Schools Student Information System (CPSSIS). CYCIS was current through December 31, 2003 and CPSSIS was current through September 2003. Because there are no identifiers that directly link students between the two systems, we used a technique called probabilistic record matching. Of the 19,371 children who were DCFS wards or in permanent placements, were between the ages of 6 and 17, and were living in the City of Chicago continuously between February 1, 2000 and May 1, 2000, 81.6 percent were matched to a student in the CPSSIS data.[1]

Measures of Academic Performance

In this report, we use several different indicators to assess the academic performance of children in out-of-home care: elementary students' scores on the reading section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the percent of elementary students who were at least one grade level behind

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[1] The match rate of 81 percent most likely underestimates the real match rate because students dropping out of school or attending a private school would not be expected to appear in both of the data systems.

for their age, and high school dropout rates. These indicators are frequently used in educational research and have also been used in previous studies of the academic performance of children in foster care (Burley & Halpern, 2001; Conger & Rebeck, 2001; Levine, 1999). There are several measurement issues as well as policy factors within CPS that affect the interpretation of findings using these indicators. Every effort was made to state the findings in ways that take these issues into consideration, but again, readers should consult Appendix A for a detailed explanation.

Analytic Approach

In an effort to disentangle effects of the educational environment vs. the experiences of abuse and neglect and the experience of being in care, we employ some advanced statistical techniques such as hierarchical linear modeling, and we also include data on three comparison groups. These three groups include children who attend a Chicago public school but never experienced a substantiated report of abuse and neglect after 1987 (referred to as "other CPS students"), children who were abused and neglected but not placed in out-of-home care, and children who had once been in out-of-home care and are now in a permanent placement. These three groups are mutually exclusive at any one specified point in time. The main focus of the report is on the experiences of the children who are in care; however, data are presented on these other groups for comparative purposes described in Appendix A.

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Qualitative Data

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In order to learn more about the circumstances of these children, we conducted in-person semi-structured interviews with DCFS and private agency caseworkers, foster parents, and school staff (principals and school case managers or school counselors). In Chicago, purposive sampling was used to select four schools, and then for each school, 2 caseworkers, 2 foster parents, and 2 school staff were selected based on their affiliation with a student in care attending one of those

schools. Outside Chicago, convenience sampling was used to select 2 caseworkers, 2 foster

parents, and 2 school staff from each of two large metropolitan areas outside Cook County.

Non-response led to a final sample of 31 interviews.[2] Appendix A provides further detail for the

final sample by type of respondent, school, and geographic region.

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

Interviews took place in the offices of the respondents or the homes of foster parents and

typically lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Respondents provided verbal consent for the

interview, and all interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Data were organized and coded

by the major and minor themes that structured the protocols. (A list of codes is provided in

Appendix B). Thematic analysis was used to search for recurring patterns and to identify core

consistencies in the data. To check the validity of the codes and interpretations, project staff

reviewed data within a code and discussed whether the coded schema and interpretation fit,

based on their perspective and substantial knowledge of the topic. Discrepancies were discussed

until consensual validation was met.

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[2] The response rate for the original Chicago sample of foster parents, residential care staff, and DCFS caseworkers
was 70 percent, 50 percent and 83 percent respectively. The reasons for non-response among foster parents were
out-of-date contact information (two cases) and a refusal. Two DCFS caseworkers were unavailable due to month-
long required trainings. The residential care provider that did not respond claimed the staff did not work with a
child attending the selected school. Replacement cases were drawn for foster parents and caseworkers in order to
achieve the goal of having 10 foster parents and 12 caseworkers in the study. In addition, in the areas outside
Chicago, the selected school principals, one school counselor, and one foster parent refused to participate in the
study. Unfortunately, the short time frame of the study did not permit the selection of a replacement case for the
residential care staff or respondents outside of Chicago.

FINDINGS

Description of the DCFS/CPS Population and Trends

Reflective of the general decline in the number of children in out-of-home care in Illinois over the past 4 years, the number of Chicago Public School (CPS) students age 6 and over in out-of-home care in September of each year has dropped by over half during the period studied, from 8,524 in 1999 to 3,679 in 2003 (see Figure1). The number of CPS students in out-of-home care at any point during a given school year is slightly higher but has followed the same downward trend over the past 4 years.

In September of 2003, DCFS wards age 6 and over who were enrolled in CPS represented approximately 1 percent of the CPS student population and 29 percent of all children ages 6 to 17 in out-of-home care in Illinois. The overlap between the DCFS and CPS populations is considerably larger if one considers all students who have ever spent time in foster care and those who have experienced abuse and/or neglect but not spent time in out-of-home care. Over 11 percent of all students age 6 and over have had a substantiated report of abuse or neglect.

Figure 1. Number of Enrolled CPS Students in Out-of-Home Care at the Beginning or End of the School Year*
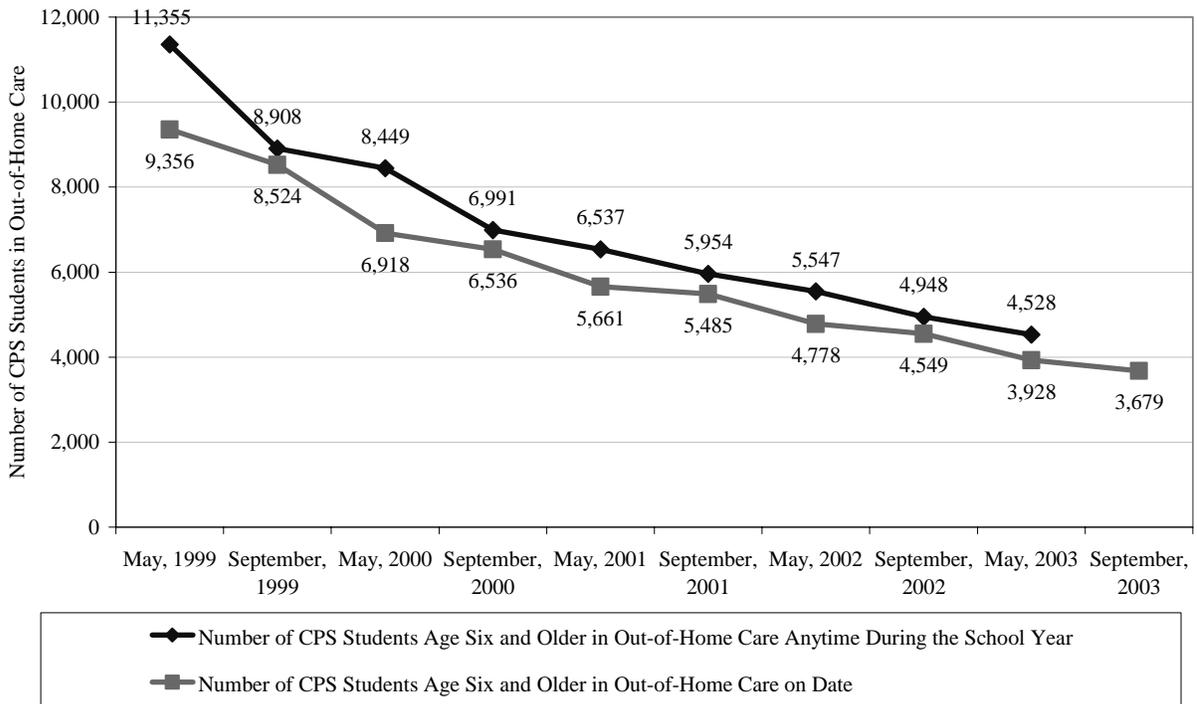
*Only CPS students who were in care for more than week druing the school year were included in the counts displayed above.

Table 1 provides descriptive information for all CPS students in out-of-home care in September 2003. An overwhelming majority of the students are African American, slightly more than half are male, and approximately 57 percent are between first and eighth grade. Slightly less than two-thirds of the students spent their time in care primarily in either a relative or non-relative foster home or both, and about one-fifth of the students have spent more than 30 days in an institutional setting. As of September 2003, approximately 72 percent of these students had been in care for 2 or more years, 13 percent had been in foster care between 1 and 2 years, and about 15 percent had been in care for less than a year.

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Table 1. Characteristics of CPS Students in Out-of-Home Care between September 2003 and December 2003

(*N* = 4,467)

Grade	%	Race	%
Pre-K	7.7	White	3.9
Kindergarten	5.6	African American	87.6
First	6.0	Latino	8.2
Second	7.0	Native American	0.1
Third	7.2	Asian/Pacific Islanders	0.2
Fourth	7.8		
Fifth	7.0	**History of Out-of-Home Placement(s)***	**%**
Sixth	7.2	Relative foster care	22.5
Seventh	7.1	Non-relative foster care	16.7
Eighth	7.4	Relative and non-relative foster care	22.8
Ninth	10.4	Institutionalized more than 50% of the total	9.9
Tenth	7.6	time in care	
Eleventh	5.6	Multiple placements, with	10.9
Twelfth	4.4	institutionalization more than 30 days	
Grade		but less than 50% of their time in care	
Unknown**	2.0	Other	17.1
Gender	**%**		
Male	53.5		
Female	46.5		

* Placement history for this group was coded based on time spent in care prior to December 2003. "Other" includes children who spent all of their time in independent living, children who spent the majority of their time running away, and children with multiple placements but less than 30 days institutionalized. Runaway, detention, and hospital/health facility placement codes were excluded from this categorization as these events typically represented interruptions in the primary placement and will be analyzed separately. A more detailed description of how these categories were coded can be found in Appendix C.

** Because these students are enrolled in a school outside of the CPS system but are receiving or being evaluated for special education services provided by CPS, they are not assigned a grade in the CPS information system.

Type of School and Concentration of Children in Out-of-Home Care

In September of 2003, 3,211 DCFS wards were enrolled in CPS elementary schools and 1,255 DCFS wards were enrolled in CPS high schools. Most (90%) of the children in elementary schools attended general education schools, although a small percentage attended selective or magnet schools (2.4%), state pre-kindergarten programs or cradle to the classroom programs (2.6%), private tuition schools (3.0%), special education schools (1.4%), or alternative or jail

schools (0.4%).[3] Seventy-one percent of high school students attended general education

schools, 12 percent attended private tuition schools, and 3 to 5 percent attended each of the

following types of schools: selective or magnet, alternative, jail, and special education. The

proportion of students in care attending selective or magnet schools is disproportionately low

relative to other CPS students, particularly among high school students. (Seven percent of other

CPS elementary students and 16 percent of other CPS high school students attend magnet

schools.) Available data did not allow us to determine whether the disproportionately low

enrollment in magnet schools by children in foster care is a function of lower performance or a

lack of knowledge on the part of the DCFS caseworker or foster parent about availability and the

application process for these schools. The proportion of students in care attending private tuition

schools is disproportionately high compared to other CPS students, especially among high school

students. (Less than one-half of 1 percent of CPS elementary school students and 1 percent of

high school students attend private tuition schools.)

Table 2 shows the extent to which children in out-of-home care are attending the same

CPS schools.[4] Focusing on the schools where 20 or more students are in out-of-home care, we

see that almost one-quarter of the elementary school students in out-of-home care are enrolled in

27 elementary schools, which represent just 5 percent of all of the CPS elementary schools.

Similarly, almost half of all high school students in out-of-home care are enrolled in 16 high

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[3] In some rare situations, CPS will pay the tuition for a student to attend a private school that can better accommodate students' special needs.

[4] Only general education schools were included in this analysis. No more than 13% of students in care attended any one other type of elementary or high school and within those types, it is difficult to disaggregate school level information for students in private tuition schools, alternative schools, and state pre-kindergarten and cradle to the classroom programs.

schools, which represent 18 percent of all CPS high schools.[5] The extent to which children in

out-of-home care are concentrated in a small number of schools may present an opportunity for

implementing targeted interventions that reach a large number of students in care; however,

proportionate to the size of the student body in each of the CPS school, no general CPS school

was found to have more than 6 percent of its student population in out-of-home care at any one

point in time.

Table 2. Concentration of Children in Care in CPS General Education Schools

	Elementary Schools			High Schools		
Number of Children in Out-of-Home Care, per School	Number of Elementary Schools	Percent of All CPS Elementary Schools (%)	Percent of Elementary Students in Out-of-Home Care Attending These Schools (%)	Number of High Schools	Percent of All CPS High Schools (%)	Percent of High School Students in Out-of-Home Care Attending These Schools (%)
10 or more	114	22	62	40	44	81
15 or more	50	10	37	26	29	64
20 or more	27	5	24	16	18	47

Figure 2 is a map depicting the location of elementary schools with 15 or more students

in out-of-home care. Many of these schools are located in neighborhoods on the south and west

sides of the City of Chicago. The high schools are slightly more dispersed, which may be due, in

part, to the fact that high schools serve larger geographic areas and to the location of some of the

group homes or residential care facilities in Chicago.

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[5] The elementary school analysis only examines students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through 8, and the high school analysis only looks at students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. If a school serves both elementary and high school students, the school is treated as two schools, one elementary and one high school. For instance, a school serving sixth through ninth graders would be counted as an elementary school serving sixth through eighth graders and a high school serving ninth graders.

Figure 2

Chicago Public Elementary Schools with 15 or More Students in Out of Home Care in 2003

- ◆ 15 or more

Median Family Income in 1999
- 0 - 28,659
- 28,659 - 40,388
- 40,388 - 55,082
- 55,082 and up
- Community Areas
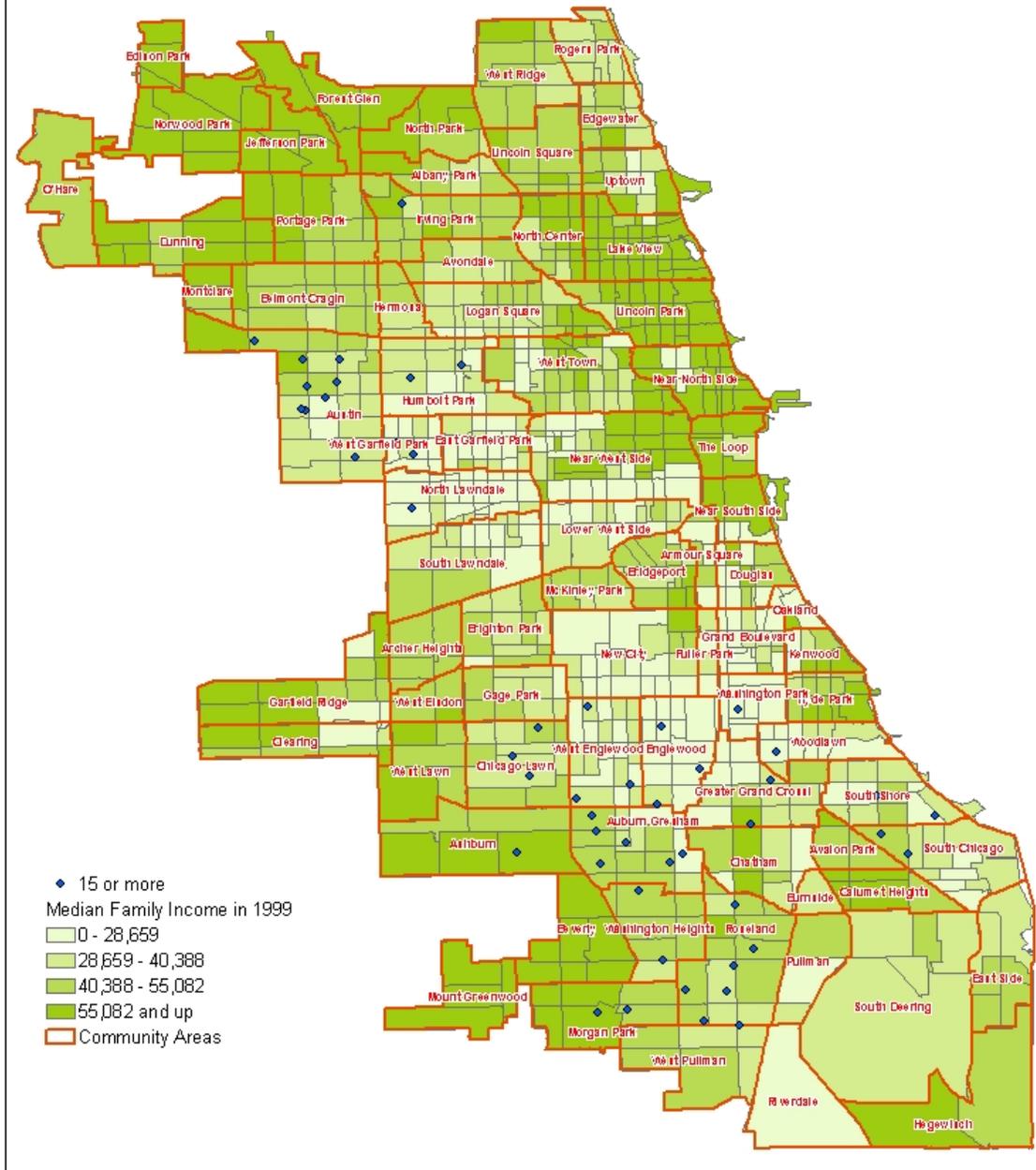
The academic quality of the schools in which a large proportion of children in foster care are concentrated is of concern as the low achievement observed among students in care may be partially attributable to the schools that they attend. Of the elementary schools serving 20 or more students in foster care, nearly a third (30%) are extremely low-achieving (defined as schools where less than 25% of the third- through eighth-grade students are achieving at national norms in reading), almost half (48%) are low-achieving schools (defined as schools where 25 to 35 percent of third- through eighth-grade students are achieving at national norms in reading), and none of them are considered high-achieving (defined as schools where 50% or more of third-through eighth-grade students are achieving national norms on the reading section of the ITBS). In comparison, only 17 percent of other CPS elementary schools are extremely low-achieving, 26 percent are low-achieving, 25 percent are moderate-achieving, and 31 percent are high-achieving.

Although no standardized tests were administered to high school freshman in 2003, high school dropout rates may reveal one aspect of academic quality in the schools. Of the high schools serving 20 or more students in foster care, 94 percent had 4-year dropout rates for 14-year-olds that exceeded 30 percent (compared to 48% of other CPS high schools that have dropout rates this high).

The poor performance of the high schools attended by students in foster care raises questions about how they are selecting their high school. A large number of high school students take advantage of CPS policies that allow them to attend a high school outside their neighborhood attendance area. Recognizing the need to assist students in care, their DCFS

caseworkers, and their foster parents in choosing a high-quality high school, earlier this year CPS held a high school fair for students in foster care.

Academic Performance

This section presents findings on the following indicators of academic performance: achievement on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), being old for grade among elementary schools students, and graduation and dropout rates among high school students.[6] All of these indicators are commonly used in educational research and have been used in previous studies of the academic performance of children in foster care (Burley & Halpern, 2001; Conger & Rebeck, 2001; Levine, 1999).

Reading Achievement

In June of 2003, almost half of third- through eighth-grade students in out-of-home care scored in the bottom quartile on the ITBS reading section (see Table A3).[7] Across grades, the proportion of students in out-of-home care scoring in the bottom quartile was consistently higher than the proportion of other CPS students, with differences ranging from 13 to 21 percentage points. Both of the other comparison groups—students who were abused and neglected but not placed in care and students in permanent placement—performed similarly to students in out-of-home care in the third and fourth grades; however, the differences between each of these groups and other CPS students is slightly smaller in fifth through eighth grades. Moreover, students who were abused and neglected and not placed performed slightly better than students in permanent placement in fourth through eighth grade. The weaker academic performance of

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[6] For a more detailed description of each of the indicators, please refer back to the section on measuring academic performance in the Methods Section in Appendix A.

[7] Given that a large portion of youth in care are classified as disabled, test scores of disabled students were included in these analyses despite the fact that CPS often separates these scores. However, consistent with CPS reporting, test scores of students in bilingual education for less than 4 years were excluded from these analyses as weak English skills can undermine the validity of the test score.

abused and neglected children relative to other CPS students suggests that the low performance of students in care is partly attributable to their experiences of abuse and neglect before entering care. Students in permanent placement perform slightly better than students in out-of-home care—particularly in the later grades—however; it is unclear from this cross-sectional analysis whether there are either selection effects occurring or these students' performance stabilizes after they exit care.

Table 3. Performance of Third through Eighth Graders on the ITBS Administered in June, 2003

	N	Bottom Quartile (%)	Second Quartile (%)	Third Quartile (%)	Top Quartile (%)
Third Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	453	47	29	18	6
Permanent Placement	1,498	48	32	16	4
Abuse/Neglect	2,804	47	33	16	5
Other CPS	26,939	34	32	23	11
Fourth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	362	47	30	17	6
Permanent Placement	1,198	48	30	17	5
Abuse/Neglect	2,112	44	29	20	7
Other CPS	23,707	29	29	27	15
Fifth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	346	49	30	17	4
Permanent Placement	1,375	43	37	15	5
Abuse/Neglect	2,313	39	37	18	7
Other CPS	27,918	28	34	25	13
Sixth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	411	52	29	14	4
Permanent Placement	1,765	49	33	14	4
Abuse/Neglect	2,597	46	33	15	6
Other CPS	30,297	35	33	21	11
Seventh Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	340	45	36	15	5
Permanent Placement	1,338	42	34	17	6
Abuse/Neglect	2,014	38	35	18	8
Other CPS	24,792	25	34	24	17
Eighth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	351	43	34	20	3
Permanent Placement	1,479	38	36	19	8
Abuse/Neglect	2,215	33	35	23	9
Other CPS	25,296	22	32	28	18

The findings presented in Table 3 are descriptive and do not take into account the fact that many students in out-of-home care are concentrated in poorer-performing schools. Thus, we used hierarchical linear modeling to compare the performance of students in care with the performance of other demographically similar CPS students attending the same school. Table 4 shows the differences in reading standard scores (see the Measures of Academic Performance section above for description of standard scores) for our three groups of students who have come into contact with DCFS relative to other CPS students, first controlling for age (Model 1) and then controlling for demographic characteristics and the school attended (Model 2).[8] Estimating that 13 points on the standard scale approximates an average year's learning, we see that students in care are on average nearly a year and a fifth (about 16 points) behind other CPS students when students' age is entered as a control. This large discrepancy coincides with the previously presented finding that nearly 50 percent of students in care score in the bottom quartile in reading. Similarly, students in permanent placement are over a year behind, and students who were abused and neglected and not placed in care are about a year behind.

Table 4. Changes in Effects for Performance on the 2003 ITBS Reading Section after Controlling for Demographic Factors and School Enrollment

Contact with DCFS (reference group = CPS students with no substantiated maltreatment)	Model 1 Achievement Differences Controlling for Age	Model 2 Achievement Differences Controlling for Demographic and School Factors	Percent Change from Model 1 to Model 2
Currently in Out-of-Home Care	-15.7	-7.5	52%
Abused/Neglected and Not Placed	-12.4	-5.8	53%
Currently in Permanent Placement	-14.8	-5.6	62%

* A full description of these statistical models, including the control variables used in model two, is provided in Appendix D.

Once student demographic characteristics are statistically controlled and students are compared only to other students in their school, the achievement gap separating students in care

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[8] Students' age instead of grade level is used because a significant number of students are retained during their academic career in CPS.

from other CPS students narrows by over 50 percent, from 15.7 to 7.5 standard scale points (see Table 4). This suggests that the weaker academic performance of students in care is partially attributable to students in care attending lower-achieving elementary schools as well as the existence in CPS of general achievement inequities along race and socioeconomic lines (Rosenkranz, June 2002). However, even after controlling for these factors, students in care are trailing other students attending their school by over half a year's learning. The persistence of this achievement gap indicates the need to investigate further how and to what extent students' experiences of abuse and neglect or out-of-home placements influence students' achievement.

With regard to children who have been abused and neglected but not placed in care, Table 4 portrays a similar narrowing of the achievement gap between CPS students and abused or neglected children, from 12.4 to 5.8 standard scale points. The fact that the achievement gap for students in care is only slightly larger than the achievement gap for students who have been abused and neglected suggests that a substantial portion of the achievement gap for students in care may be attributable to their experience of abuse and neglect. The conclusions drawn from this cross-sectional information, however, are limited, and the relationship between entering care and student achievement needs to be explored further in longitudinal models.

Before moving to longitudinal models, we examine the extent to which the placement histories of students in care are related to 2003 ITBS reading achievement scores. Table 5 lists the six types of placement categories (further detailed in Appendix C) and the differences between each of these groups and CPS students who have no substantiated maltreatment. Although students who spent their time primarily in relative care or a mix of relative and non-relative care still performed poorly compared to other CPS students in their school, this difference of about 5 to 6 standard points or about forty percent of a year's learning was much

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smaller than the differences found for students with other placement histories. Conversely, students who had spent the majority of their time in institutionalized settings were scoring over 25 standard points behind other students in their schools or nearly 2 years of learning. Students with other placement histories were scoring between 8 or 10 standard points or around three-quarters of a year's learning behind students in their schools.

Table 5. Relative Performance on the Reading Section of the ITBS by Type of Placement

Contact with DCFS (reference group = CPS students with no substantiated maltreatment)	Standard Score Differences After Controlling for Demographic and School Factors
Primarily Relative Foster Care	-5.8
Primarily Non-Relative Foster Care	-9.0
Both Relative and Non-Relative Foster Care	-4.6
Primarily Institutionalized Care	-25.0
Multiple Placements with Substantial Institutionalization	-7.5
Other Placement History	-9.6

Finally, in an effort to assess changes in academic performance over time, we tracked the reading achievement of six cohorts of 8-year-olds in out-of-home care using Rasch reading scores (see Measures of Academic Performance in Appendix A: Methods for an explanation of Rasch scores), starting with those who were age 6 in 1994 and following them through 2001.[9]

Three longitudinal models were used to analyze these students' change in academic performance over time. A full description of these models can be found in Appendix E. In each of these models, students in care were divided into four groups based on the amount of time they spent in care, with their family, and in a permanent placement. The four categories were: students whose full academic career in CPS was spent in care, students who entered CPS in care and then moved to a permanent placement, CPS students who started CPS while living with their family and then moved into out-of-home care, and CPS students who started CPS while living

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[9] The Rasch-reading scores are not available for 2002 and 2003.

with their family then moved into out-of-home care and finally moved into a permanent placement during their academic career in CPS.

When no demographic controls were entered, students in care performed more poorly than other CPS students at age 8 and had weaker reading gains (see Model 1 in Table 6).[10] Specifically, students in care who transitioned into a permanent placement between age 8 and 13 were approximately eight-tenths of a year's learning behind other CPS students at age 8. Moreover, their yearly reading gains were 4 percent of a year's learning behind other CPS students. This means that if the student in care was enrolled in CPS between 8 and 13 years old, he or she would fall behind other CPS students by almost a fourth of a year's learning. Students who are in care their full academic career in CPS and students who transition from their family into care during their school years are farther behind other CPS students, over 1 year's learning at age 8, and have yearly growth rates that are 7 to 8 percent of a year's learning slower.

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[10] The test performance of bilingual students who had been in bilingual education for four or fewer years was included in this analysis. Dummy codes were entered to account for fact that their reading scores during their early years in bilingual education will be depressed do to learning English.

Table 6. Reading Growth of Eight-Year-Olds in Care from May, 1993 to May, 2001 between Third and Eighth Grade

Categories of Students in Care (reference group = CPS students with no substantiated maltreatment)	Model 1 No Statistical Controls	Model 2 Demographic Statistical Controls	Model 3 Demographic Statistical Controls and Performance at Age 8
Reading Achievement at Age 8 **(Coefficient divided by average yearly growth age 8 through 13)**			
Always in out-of-home care	-1.02*	-.92*	-.92*
Transitioned from care to a permanent placement	-.81*	-.62*	-.62*
Transitioned from their family to in care	-1.07*	-.92*	-.92*
Transitioned from family to care to permanent placement	-.60*	-.45*	-.45*
Yearly Growth in Reading Score **(Coefficient divided by average yearly growth age 8 through 13)**			
Always in out-of-home care	-.077*	-.040*	-.068*
Transitioned from care to a permanent placement	-.038*	-.000	-.017*
Transitioned from their family to in care	-.066*	-.030^	-.055*
Transitioned from family to care to permanent placement	-.058*	-.026^	-.038*

*p<.05.   ^p<.10

Once demographic controls are entered (see Model 2 in Table 4), students in care are still performing below similar CPS students at age 8, ranging from about a half of a year's learning to about nine-tenths of a year's learning, but their reading gains are similar to those (i.e., not statistically different) of other similar CPS students. The one exception to this trend is that students in care their full careers in CPS have growth rates that are about 4 percent slower than similar CPS students. Over time, students in care are failing to close the substantial gap in reading achievement separating them from other CPS students at age 8 and may be falling even farther behind.

In the CPS system in general, students who scored below average on the ITBS reading test at age 8 tended to improve their reading scores at a faster rate each year, or have larger reading gains, than students who scored above average on the reading test when they were 8 years old. Taking this into account, the third model in Table 6 compares students in care to other

CPS students who performed at the same reading level when they were 8 years old. Students in care advance at an annual rate that is about 2 to 7 percent of a year's learning slower than that of other CPS students. In other words, unlike other low-achieving students in CPS, students in care have reading gains that approximate those of other CPS students, and thus they do not close the reading achievement gap observed at age 8.

Old for Grade

Of the third- to eighth-grade students in out-of-home care, approximately 40 percent were old for their grade (see Figure 3). This is substantially higher than the general rate in the CPS system, which is typically between 20 and 25 percent. The percent of children in permanent placements who are old for grade and the percent of children who have been abused or neglected who are old for grade are also substantially higher than other CPS students and only slightly less than the percent of students in care who are old for grade. These results suggest that children who have been abused and neglected and come in contact with DCFS are at much greater risk of falling a grade or more behind in school.

Figure 3. Percent of Students Old for their Grade in June, 2003:
First Through Eighth Grade

Legend
▨ Out of Home Care ▩ Permanent Placement ☐ Abuse/Neglect ☐ Other CPS
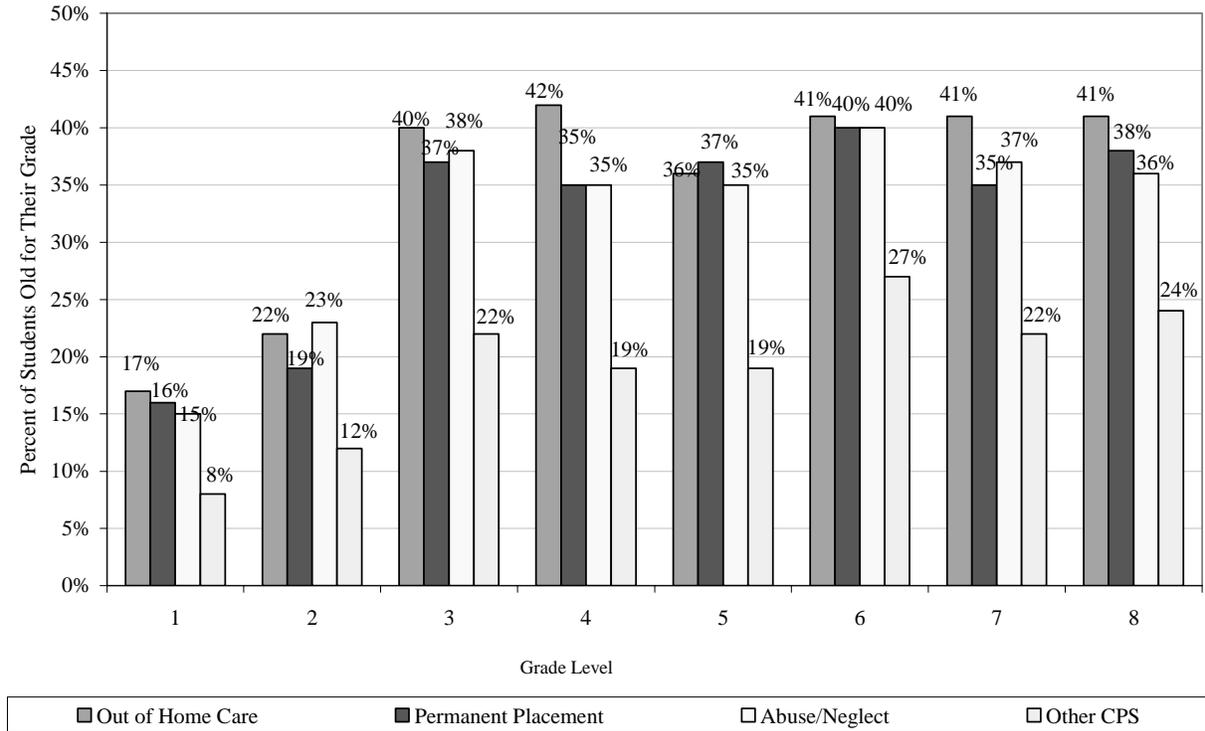
Table 7 presents selected findings from two statistical models that further explore the differences between students in care and other CPS students in the likelihood of being old for grade.[11] Controlling just for children's age (Model 1), students in care were nearly 2.5 times more likely to be old for grade than other CPS students. Once demographic factors were controlled and comparisons were made to other CPS students attending the same schools, this difference in the likelihood of being old for grade decreased to 1.8 times as likely as other CPS students. Similar decreases in the likelihood of being old for grade were found for students who were abused and neglected and students in permanent placements.

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[11] Only students attending general education or selective schools were included in the analyses. Students in special education and alternative schools were excluded because the analysis comparing students in care with students attending the same schools obscure the reasons and academic problems that led students to be assigned to a special education or alternative school.

Table 7. Changes in the Likelihood of being Old for Grade Compared to Other CPS at the end of 2003 School Year Controlling for Demographic Factors and School Enrollment

Contact with DCFS	Model 1 Old for Grade Differences Controlling for Age	Model 2 Old for Grade Differences Controlling for Demographic and School Factors	Percent Change from Model 1 to Model 2 (%)
Model Intercept	-1.39	-1.78	
Currently in Out-of-Home Care			
Coefficient	.89	.56	37
Odds Ratio	2.4	1.8	
Abused/Neglected and Not Placed			
Coefficient	.73	.48	34
Odds Ratio	2.1	1.6	
Currently in Permanent Placement			
Coefficient	.64	.28	56
Odds Ratio	1.9	1.3	

Next, we examined the extent to which the placement history of students in care related to their chances of being old for grade in 2003. Table 8 lists the six types of placement history categories (further detailed in Appendix C) and the differences in the likelihood of being old for grade between each of these groups and CPS students who have no substantiated maltreatment. For most of the categories of placement type histories, students in care were about 1.8 times more likely to be old for grade than other CPS students attending their schools, even after controlling for the demographic characteristics. However, the effect was noticeably larger for students who primarily spent their time in out-of-home care in institutionalized settings, as they were 2.3 times more likely to be old for grade than other CPS students.

Table 8. Students Who Had Spent the Majority of their Time in Care in Institutionalized Settings Were More Likely to Be Old for Grade

Contact with DCFS	Chance Students were Old for Grade Controlling for Demographic and School Factors
Model Intercept	-1.7
Primarily Relative Foster Care	
Coefficient	.56
Odds Ratio	1.8
Primarily Non-Relative Foster Care	
Coefficient	.55
Odds Ratio	1.7
Both Relative and Non-Relative Foster Care	
Coefficient	.51
Odds Ratio	1.7
Primarily Institutionalized Care	
Coefficient	.85
Odds Ratio	2.3
Multiple Placements with Substantial Institutionalization	
Coefficient	.31
Odds Ratio	1.4
Other Placement History	
Coefficient	.62
Odds Ratio	1.9

In order to better understand when students are falling behind grade, we attempted to determine how many first graders are entering the system old for grade and to document the percent of students in care that are being retained at each grade level. Nearly one in ten students in care is old-for-grade when they enter CPS in first grade (see Table 9), and this is double the percent of other CPS students who are old for grade. The percent of abused and neglected students who are old for grade when they enter first grade is similar, possibly because students in care are not enrolling in a CPS kindergarten or pre-school. Although this is true for around 30 percent of the students in care who entered first grade old for grade, around three-fourths were enrolled in a CPS kindergarten.[12] This finding highlights the need to understand why some

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[12] These students, however, could have been enrolled in a private school pre-kindergarten program.

children are enrolled in kindergarten two years in a row (this is true for about a quarter to a third of all students who are old for grade), or are being enrolled in kindergarten a year late.

Table 9. Percent of Students Entering First Grade Who are Old for Grade

The Year the Student Entered First Grade	In Out-of-Home Care (%)	Permanent Placement (%)	Abused or Neglected (%)	Other CPS (%)
1999	9	6	7	3
2000	11	5	9	4
2001	8	5	9	4
2002	8	6	9	4
2003	10	7	7	4

Another possible explanation for why some students in care may be old for grade upon entering first grade is that they were experiencing abuse or neglect and then entering care at around the same time they were enrolling in school. The fact that students entering first grade old for grade tended to enter care at a much older age (around 44 percent in 2003 entered when they were 6 or older) than other students in care (only 16 percent entered care when they were 6 or older) supports this supposition. The median age of entry into out-of-home care among students who entered first grade old for grade was around 5 years old in 2003, compared to 3.3 years for students in care who entered first grade at the proper age in 2003. Students who are abused and neglected and placed in care around the same time they are entering school are susceptible to enrolling in school late and may already be old for grade before they are placed in an out-of-home placement.

Before moving to examine retention rates by grade, it is important to note that over the last 4 school years, over a quarter of students in care compared to around 12 percent of other CPS students are old for grade before they ever reach the promotional requirement in third-grade. Again, age at which students enter out-of-home care is related to their chance of being old for grade when they enter grade 3. Around 30 percent of students who entered care when they were between 6 and 9 years old were old for grade when they entered third grade compared

to around 20 percent of students who entered care before they were 4 years old. Clearly, students entering care at older ages are more likely to be old for grade and that a substantial percent of students in care are falling behind grade before they confront the third-grade promotional requirements established by CPS.

Looking across all elementary grades, students in care are retained in the same grade at consistently higher rates than other CPS students (see Table 10). On average, between 2000 and 2003, around 9 percent of students in care were retained each year compared to 5 percent of other CPS students.[13] Students in permanent placements and abused and neglected students who are not placed are retained at rates similar to those experienced by students in care and slightly higher rates in third and sixth grade. Compared to other CPS students, a disproportionately large percent of students in care are failing to meet CPS promotional requirements (described in the methods section on measuring academic performance) and are being forced to repeat third, sixth, and eighth grade.

Table 10. Percent of Students Retained in the Same Grade, by Grade, Averaging across the 2001 to 2003 School Years

	Percent Retained in the Same Grade the Following September			
Grade Level	In Out-of-Home Care (%)	Permanent Placement (%)	Abused or Neglected (%)	Other CPS (%)
1	8	8	8	5
2	6	5	6	3
3	16	21	21	11
4	5	4	4	2
5	4	4	4	2
6	13	15	15	9
7	8	5	5	3
8	11	10	10	6

Many students in out-of-home care are classified as disabled; and are therefore included in Table 10 despite their exemption from CPS policy on retention. However, it should be noted

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[13] The retention rates for these three years were higher because retention rates between May, 2002 and September, 2002 were extremely high, about 7 percent. Also, about 1 to 2 percent of students in care advanced two grades during the school year and thus were able to get back on grade for their age.

that in grades 3, 6, and 8, the percent of students in care who have a special education

classification and are retained closely resembles the percentages for other CPS students, and

excluding students classified as disabled yields even higher rates of retention among students in

out-of-home care: 19 percent in third grade, 15 percent in sixth grade, and 14 percent in eighth

grade. Thus, the special education diagnosis *prevents* some students in care from being retained

in the three grades with promotional requirements, despite the fact that a large proportion (over

three-fourths) of third through eighth graders in care and in special education are scoring in the

bottom quartile in reading on the ITBS. In grades without promotional requirements, students in

care are also more likely to be retained than other students. Overall, students in care were 1.2

times more likely to be retained than other students in their schools with similar demographic

backgrounds.

This high rate of grade retention coupled with nearly 1 in 10 students in care entering

care old for grade leads to around 6 to 9 percent of 10- through 14-year-olds in care being two or

more grades behind (e.g., a 13-year-old in sixth grade instead of eighth grade) in 2003.   The

continued educational progress of these children is threatened by their falling so far behind other

students in their age cohort.

Dropout and Graduation Rates

Dropping out of high school is an important indicator of current school performance and future

employment prospects and earnings. Three age groups of students in out-of-home care, in

permanent placements, and who had been abused or neglected were followed from September

1998 through September 2003 to track dropout and graduation rates (see Table 11).[14] In all three

age groups, the proportion of students in care who dropped out was 50 percent or more, far

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[14] Groups were followed for 5 years because a substantial number of CPS students fall behind a grade and enter high school late. Also, a significant number of students take 5 years to complete high school. These facts are

exceeding the proportion of other CPS students who drop out. Students in care were also much

more likely to leave school due to incarceration, with 1 in 10 15-year-olds in care having been

incarcerated. The dropout and incarceration rates contribute to the alarmingly low graduation

rates for students in care; only one-fifth of 13-year-olds in care and slightly less than 30 percent

of 14-year-olds in care in September 1998 had graduated 5 years later. Students in permanent

placement and students who have been abused and neglected graduated at rates slightly better

than those of students in out-of-home care, but still substantially below the graduation rates for

other CPS students.

Table 11. Graduation and Dropout Rates of CPS Students Over a 5-Year Period between September 1998 and September 2003*

	N	Actively Enrolled (%)	Graduated (%)	Dropped Out (%)	Incarcerated (%)
13 Years Old					
In Out-of-Home Care as of September, 1998	761	23	20	50	7
Abused or Neglected	1,708	22	29	45	4
Permanent Placement	747	28	24	44	4
Other CPS Students	21,097	20	46	33	2
14 Years Old					
In Out-of-Home Care as of September, 1998	695	9	28	56	8
Abused or Neglected	1,701	6	33	56	5
Permanent Placement	723	8	31	56	5
Other CPS Students	21,101	5	57	36	3
15 Years Old					
In Out-of-Home Care as of September, 1998	692	3	32	55	10
Abused or Neglected	1,571	3	39	52	6
Permanent Placement	665	3	39	49	9
Other CPS Students	21,672	2	59	36	3

***Students who transferred to schools outside of CPS (between 10 to 20 % of students) or left CPS for other reasons, such as entering residential care during the 4-year period, were excluded from the analysis.

The large differences in dropout rates between students in care and other CPS students

documented above for the 1998 cohort are replicated in more recent cohorts. (See Appendix F,

Tables F1 and F2 for more comprehensive tables detailing the yearly progress of several recent

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demonstrated by the finding that 5 percent of 14-year-olds are still actively enrolled in a CPS high school 5 years later.

cohorts of 13- and 14-year-olds). The dropout rates of students in care in their early years in

high school have remained relatively stable, while the dropout rates of students in permanent

placements and other CPS students have shown slight improvements.[15]

A closer examination of the yearly progress of 13-year-olds reveals that around 8 percent

of students in care are dropping out of school when they are 14 to 15, one year into high school,

and that around 15 percent are dropping out before turning 16, or two years into high school.

This is much higher than the system averages, 3 percent and 6 percent respectively, and indicates

that a sizable number of students in care are struggling to make the transition to high school and

consequently dropping out at an early age. Of the students who were 13-year-olds and in care

between 1998 and 2000, but dropped out of school before age 16, approximately 80 percent were

still in care when they dropped out. Nearly 40 percent of these children had run away at least

once between the time they turned 13 years old and the time they dropped out of school.[16]

Moreover, a tenth to a quarter had been placed in detention during this period. Finally, 20 to 25

percent were in a private institution or group home when they dropped out school.

Earlier, we reported that students in care were more likely to attend high schools with

high dropout rates; therefore, it is once again important to compare students in care to other CPS

students attending the same schools. In an unadjusted model, students in care and 14-year-old in

1998 were nearly three times more likely than other CPS students to drop out of school 5 years

later (see Table 12, Model 1). However, when controls are entered for students' demographic

characteristics and students in care are compared against other students attending the same high

school, the likelihood of students in care dropping out falls to two times the likelihood of other

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[15] Improvements in dropout rates at the beginning of high school have to be viewed cautiously because they may not translate into higher graduation rates if students drop out later in their career.

[16] More specifically, the student ran away or was detained between September 1 of the school year they turned 13 years old and the time they dropped out of school.

CPS students (see Table 12, Model 2).[17] Although the dropout rates of students in permanent placements and students who have been abused and neglected are lower than that of students in care when no controls are entered, their chance of dropping out is the same as students in care once student demographic controls are entered and students are compared against students in their own school.

Because we found differences in the rate at which students in care drop out of school, a third hierarchical linear model was added to examine the extent to which the weaker academic performance and the higher tendency to fall behind grade of students in care in elementary schools accounted for subsequent differences in their chances for dropping out of school. Although students' last eighth-grade test score and whether they were behind a grade strongly predicted their chance of dropping out of school, the differences in dropout rates between students in care and similar students attending the same school did not decrease when controls for achievement and old for grade were entered (see Table 12, Model 3). This occurred partially because high schools in Chicago tend to receive students with similar preparation levels, be it high or low. Even after controlling for their educational performance in elementary school and the high school in which they first enrolled, 14-year-olds in 1998 in care as well as those in permanent placements and abused and neglected youth were nearly two times more likely to drop out of high school.

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[17] Students were associated with the first high school they attended.

Table 12. Changes in the Likelihood of Dropping Out 5 Years Later among Students Who Were Age 14 in 1998, Controlling for Demographics, School Attended, School Achievement, and Being Old for Grade

Contact with DCFS	Model 1 Dropout Rates with No Controls	Model 2 Dropout Rates Controlling for Demographic and School Factors	Model 3 Dropout Rates Controlling for School Achievement and Old for Grade
Model Intercept	-.64*	-.53*	-.56*
Currently in Out-of-Home Care			
Coefficient	1.05*	.65*	.60*
Odds Ratio	2.9	1.9	1.8
Abused/Neglected and Not Placed			
Coefficient	.88*	.66*	.64*
Odds Ratio	2.6	1.9	1.9
Currently in Permanent Placement			
Coefficient	.95*	.66*	.63*
Odds Ratio	2.4	1.9	1.9

See Appendix D for a full description of all three regression models.
*$p \leq .05$.

Connections between Workers and Schools

Illinois DCFS currently has a practice of randomly assigning cases to workers or agencies so that caseworkers (including both DCFS workers and those employed by private agencies) may be working with children in varying locations or who may each be attending a different school. This section of the report presents a look at the average caseload size, the age mix of children assigned to a given worker, the number of different schools attended by children on a given worker's caseload, and the number of workers assigned to children in care who are attending a given school.[18] This information begins to provide a picture of some aspects of opportunities for or constraints on interactions between DCFS caseworkers and schools. These data say nothing of the actual frequency or quality of those interactions.

In June 2003, Illinois DCFS caseworkers had an average of 14 children on their caseloads, down from an average of 16 in 1999. As expected, the average number of children workers had on their caseloads over the course of an academic year was slightly higher, with the same general decline occurring over the past 4 years (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Average Number of Children Assigned to Illinois DCFS Caseworkers During the School Year, 1999 to 2003
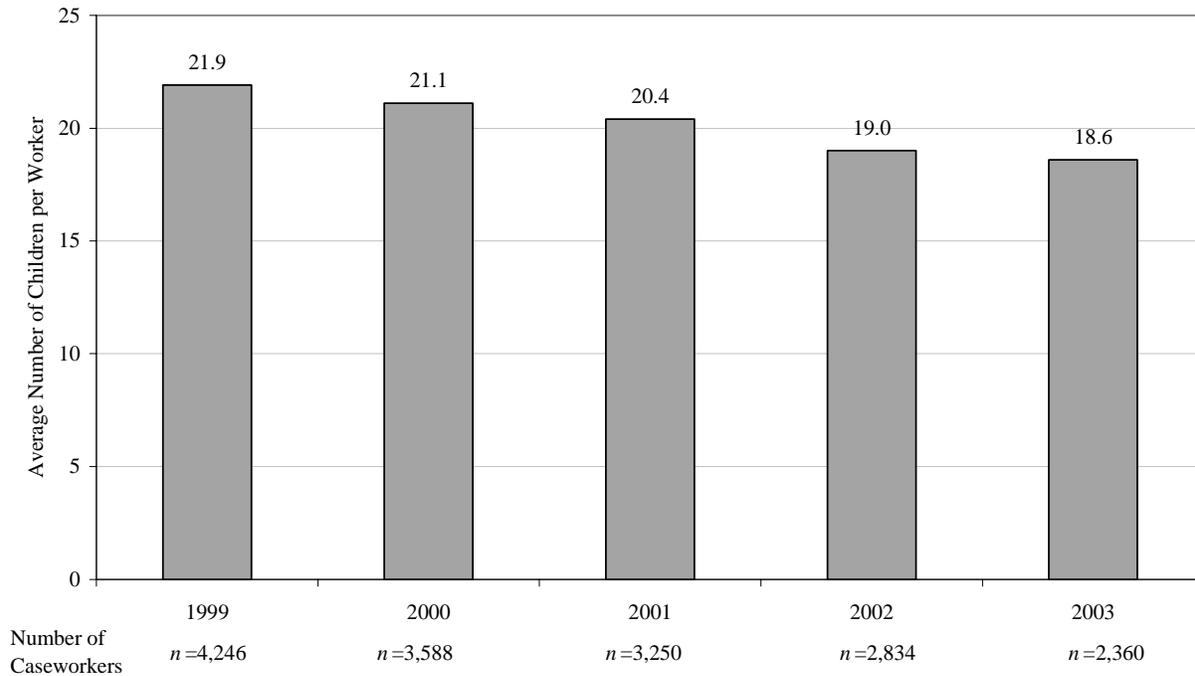
When DCFS caseworkers work with children from diverse age groups, they face diverse educational needs and consequently need to be familiar with a wider range of schools and educational options. Workers may face such challenges as making sure a child gets a high-quality pre-K or kindergarten education, helping a child pick a high school, motivating a child to stay in school, or helping a child prepare for and choose among post-secondary education

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[18] Workers with fewer than five children assigned to them were excluded from these analyses. These workers represented a small proportion of all workers and an even smaller proportion of all children in care, and their inclusion could bias estimates of means.

opportunities. Figure 5 shows the average distribution of children on workers' caseloads by age

or school eligibility and demonstrates the range of educational needs that typically exists across

workers' caseloads. In the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 20 percent of workers had

caseloads in which 75 percent or more of the children were in one of the age groups described in

Figure 5.

Figure 5. Average Percent of Illinois Caseload by Age and School Eligibility, 1999-2003
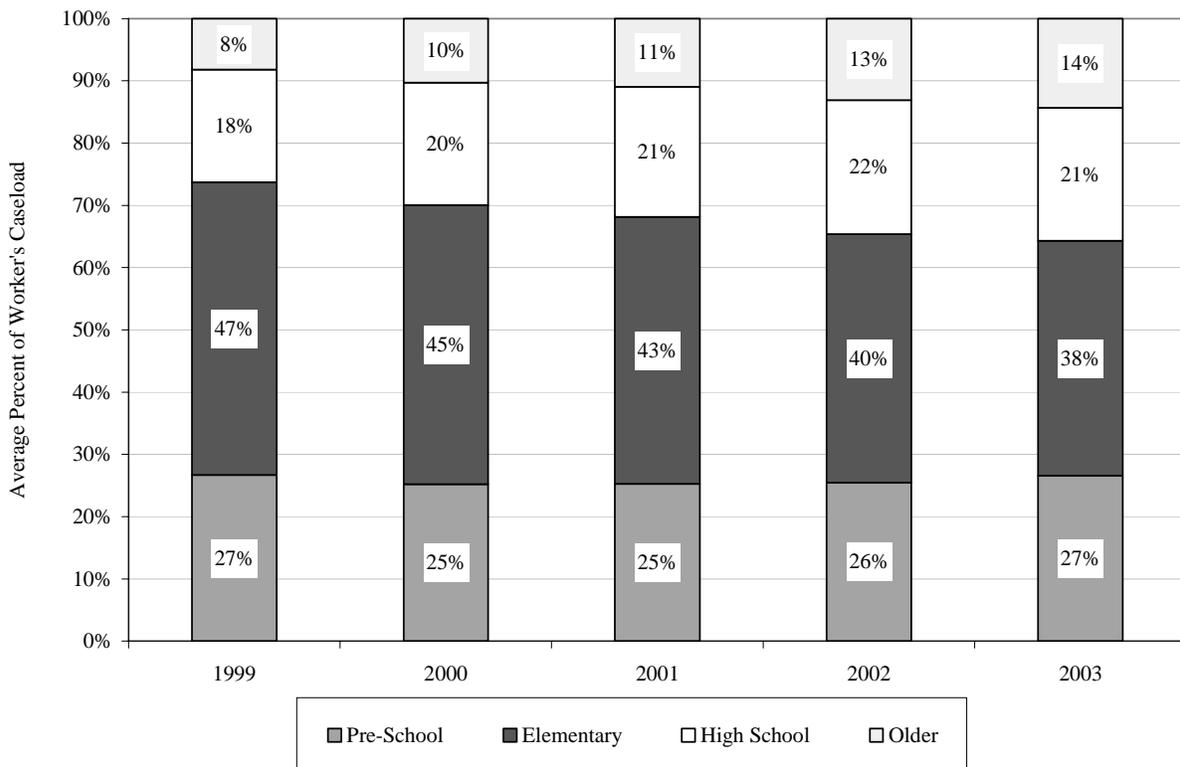
Worker turnover, promotions, and other system factors may result in changes to the

worker assigned to a given case, which may disrupt the connection between the worker or

agency and the school and the flow of information about the educational needs and experiences

of the child. As shown in Figure 6, slightly more than half of the children in out-of-home care

for the full 2002-2003 school year had only one DCFS caseworker during that time. The

stability of DCFS caseworker assignment, however, has increased over the past 4 years. The

proportion of children with three or more different DCFS caseworkers during the academic year has dropped from 26 percent in 1999 to 15 percent in 2003.

Figure 6: Changes in Workers Assigned to Children in Out-of-Home Care for the Full School Year
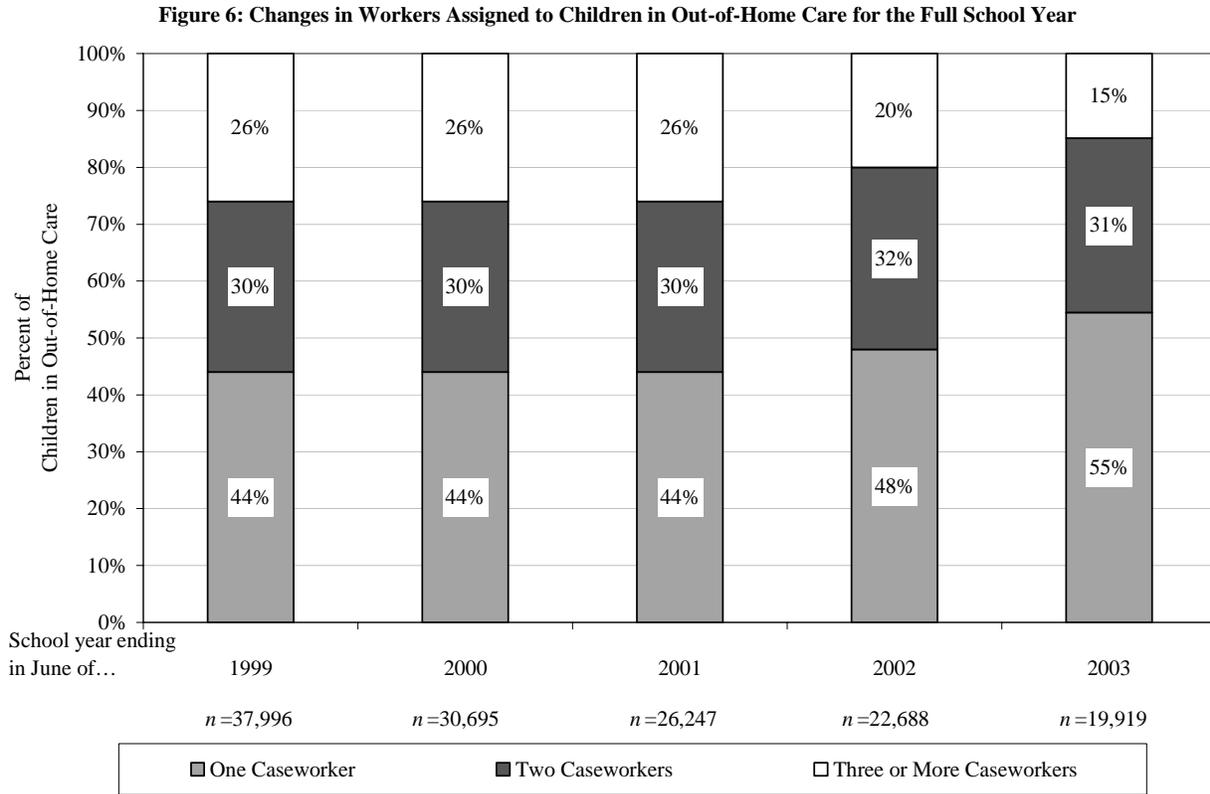
The extent to which school staff and DCFS caseworkers can work together effectively is likely to be influenced by the extent to which each has repeated interactions with the same person as opposed to a different person for each child's case. The potential for repeated interactions across multiple children's cases was assessed by calculating the number of schools that each worker must coordinate with and the number of workers that schools must coordinate with.

For each school with 10 or more students in out-of-home care during the 2003 school year, a ratio of the number of students in care to the number of DCFS caseworkers who could interact with the school during the year was calculated. If a case changed workers, then all

34

workers were included in the calculation. The average ratio was 1.16. This means that, on average, for every 10 students in out-of-home care, each of these schools will interact with about 12 DCFS caseworkers during the course of the school year.

A similar ratio was calculated for DCFS caseworkers who worked with 10 or more children over the 2002-2003 school year, at least 5 of whom were CPS students for a significant amount of time ($n = 642$). The ratio for these DCFS caseworkers represents the number of different Chicago public schools attended by students in their caseload divided by number of students in their caseload. The average ratio was .83, indicating that, on average, for every 10 CPS students on their caseload over the course of the school year, workers will interact with about 8 different schools. The fact that siblings are often assigned to the same DCFS caseworker is one factor that most likely contributes to this ratio being less than 1.

Data from the qualitative interviews supported the quantitative findings that the DCFS caseworker-school connection is a weak one. The twelve DCFS caseworkers interviewed reported that children on their current caseload attended anywhere from 5 to 12 different schools, and all DCFS caseworkers had a mix of elementary, high school, or private schools (day treatment or special education schools). Furthermore, five of the eight Chicago area DCFS caseworkers reported working with children who attended schools outside Chicago; thus the quantitative data, which includes only Chicago public schools, most likely underestimates the total number of schools. In the areas outside Chicago, three of the four caseworkers reported working with children enrolled in schools that were 40 to 50 miles from the town in which their offices were located. Collaboration may be even more difficult when occurring between different school districts as each school district has its own regulations and codes.

At least one of the caseworkers interviewed articulated the lack of connection with the schools, saying:

> you know [kids in foster care] just sometimes kind of get lost…in the cracks because I've come out to a school and I might have been the seventh worker that the school has seen…since the child has been in eighth grade…which would be a good thing if he has only had seven workers and he has been in the same school. …[The teachers] don't remember my name. I'm looking in my book so I can remember theirs. I mean it's just different.

The potential for repeated interactions and thus the development of professional, collaborative relationships is constrained by the relatively high numbers of workers with whom school staff must coordinate or school staff with whom workers must coordinate.

Communication Patterns

Our analysis of the qualitative data examining patterns of school mobility, enrollment, and the special education process highlighted the quality of communication that occurs between the central parties responsible for the care, development, and well-being of the child. In many of the issues surrounding mobility, enrollment, and special education, poor communication—or the total absence of communication—seemed to be a dominating factor. It appears that the major source of miscommunication is that everybody has a different perspective about who is responsible for communicating what to whom. In the case of a child living with his or her biological parents, the flow of communication and the parties who are ultimately responsible for receiving and giving relevant information is typically clear and straightforward—the school personnel and the parents (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Typical School-Parent Communication Flow

S C H O O L 1 ⟺ P A R E N T S 1
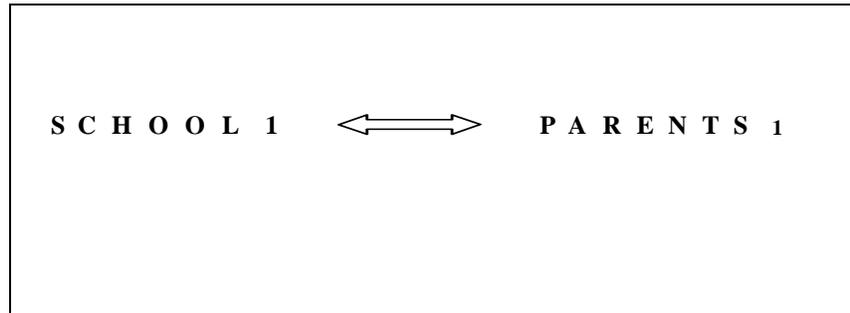
In the case of children living with foster parents, whether relative or non-relative, the flow of communication and the source of information important for the child's academic progress become less clear. Consider the data indicating that changes may occur in one or all of the following areas: the home in which the child resides (and thus the direct caregiver), the school the child attends, and the DCFS caseworker assigned to work with the child. Figure 8 represents the flow of communication needed.

Figure 8. Communication Patterns among Schools, Caseworkers, and Foster Parents

SCHOOL 1 ⟺ PARENTS 1

Case Worker 1

Case Worker 2

SCHOOL 2 ⟺ PARENTS 2
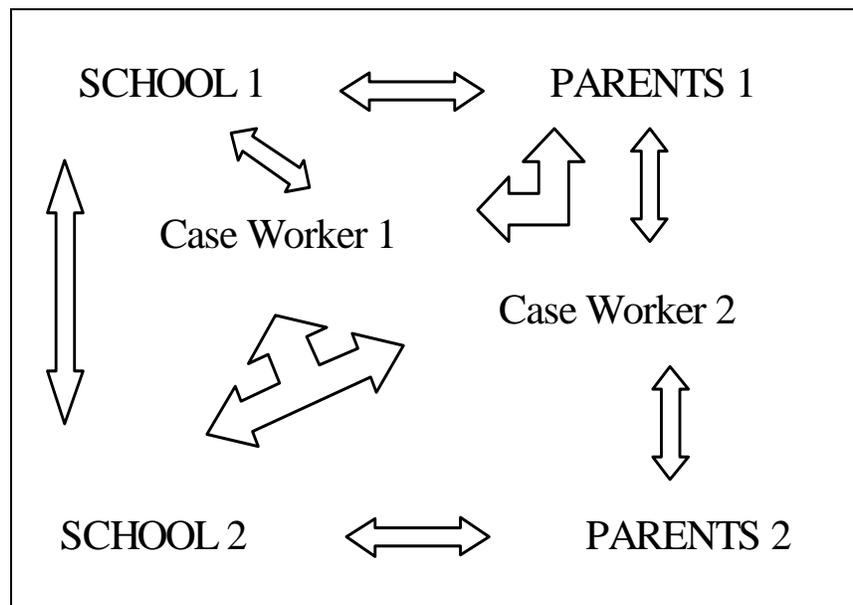
Many, if not most, of the DCFS caseworkers and school staff suggested that the flow of communication and information should occur as it would if the child were not a ward of the state, viewing foster parents as if they were biological parents. Three of the four principals stated that foster parents have the same responsibility and role as birth parents when it comes to educating children: to ensure the child comes to school, knows the rules, behaves appropriately, and has requisite supplies to carry out school work.

Several school case managers indicated that they see the foster parents as the primary source of information and the central party for all communication about the child's school involvement, as reflected in the following statement:

> I think [the foster parent's role] is critical and I think it needs to be close and supportive…of the student and the school. And I think with these kids being high-needs kids I think their obligation and ours as well is to maintain high level of communication and I guess become personally familiar with the student's teachers and case manager.

One DCFS caseworker states that in his experience, schools should and prefer to work directly with foster parents; it is the foster parents' responsibility to communicate with the schools. Several DCFS caseworkers state they just "can't" be the one ultimately responsible for communicating with the schools. As one DCFS caseworker explained:

> With 18 kids it's easy to loose track of which ones you're not getting progress reports on…not just me as a case worker, but also the foster parents following up on this child's progress in school and being able to identify problems early on as they start to arrive, maybe being able to nip them in the bud before they become something… because a foster parent has just that one, just those few kids that's in their home. Not saying that it's easy to keep even track of those three, but imagine having to keep track of 18. And I think it'd be easier for the foster parent to maintain regular contact with the school because let's face it, if it were my own kids I'm gonna be up in school more than twice a year. But all I'm required to do is go to school twice a year, see how that child is doing. So I'm not really gonna have regular contact with the school like the child needs.

All ten DCFS caseworkers say they typically get information from the foster parent—sometimes haphazardly during a monthly visit, or more commonly, when a problem with the child arises. For example, one DCFS caseworker mentioned that she learned just days before on a monthly home visit that a child on her caseload had been suspended from school. Another DCFS caseworker learned inadvertently about a child on her caseload failing the seventh grade. She explained:

> I was talking to his Mom and she mentioned something about not having money to pay for John to go to summer school so he was gonna fail and have to repeat seventh grade. And this was . . . pretty much after the fact because she had gotten a letter a couple of weeks prior to that and the deadline to pay for summer school had already passed. And then at that point she was in crisis mode wondering what she was gonna do . . . And so we went ahead and made arrangements to speak with the counselor to see if maybe they could give them some financial assistance to pay for summer school or what could be done, so that he could pass seventh grade, if they didn't have the money, since summer school is like $200 now and most of our clients don't have it.

DCFS caseworkers expressed the belief that it is not only the foster parents' ultimate responsibility to communicate with the school, as if the child were biologically theirs, but also to be the party to initiate communication and share information with the DCFS caseworker. One DCFS caseworker explained, "…speak up and tell us…Make us aware of things so we can help."

DCFS caseworkers rely heavily on the foster parents to let them know what is going on with a child. Communication with schools, on the other hand, was often seen as fulfilling purely administrative function. Talk to parents monthly; go to schools as required (two to three times a year). Some reported that they don't actually talk to the teacher, but just request the teacher fill out the paper work and mail it back to them.

Some parents viewed themselves as the initiator of communication not because they feel that is their responsibility as caregivers, but because they felt abandoned with the child with no

one else to do it or help them do it. Two of the foster parents were particularly articulate about

this feeling of isolation:

> I have been in this by myself. That's what I feel like, I get the aid from the
> counselor and I'm getting some terrible reports about that, I just feel like I'm in it
> by myself. And I can see why people don't want to be foster parents, you know.
> You're always dealing with the disruptiveness of the child, and then when you're
> not getting the help that you really need from DCFS, I mean who wants to be a
> foster parent…I mean you would think that they would make it a little bit easier.

> I just had a lot of different workers when I was really asking for help for Janine. I
> just couldn't get no one to help me because they didn't stay her worker long
> enough to help me.

In contrast, the foster parents most satisfied with the communication they have with the

school and DCFS, described that they feel like the "part of a team."

> Me and her. [The caseworker] keeps in touch with the school as much as I do.
> We have to double team them, it's all it is too it, we have to.
> _____

> They call me right back. They have pagers and cell phones and normally I'll call
> his cell phone and if I don't get'm…because most of the time it's late at
> night…they'll call me right back and then they say they come out. But they're
> very helpful. We call it a team pride…I have a team. I have a good team.

Frequent and effective communication about educational issues may ideally require a team

approach; however, the expectations of all parties involved must be made explicit.

Although foster parents may have the most direct, daily knowledge of children's

educational experiences and progress, they also have constraints on their time and competing

demands. One school case manager recognized the problem of making foster parents the foci of

communication stating, "I know that they're stretched a little thin and that makes it a little hard."

In laying out the expectations for foster parents and their role in communicating with the schools,

the total family context is critical. Five of the 9 foster parents interviewed had 4 or more

children in the home, and in all but two of the homes, the children in the home attended

multiple—sometimes as many as five—different schools. In addition to obligations imposed by multiple school calendars and multiple school staff with whom to meet or communicate, many of these foster parents were employed and also mentioned other services, appointments, or visitation requirements that demanded their time and attention.

Communication Involving Residential or Group Homes

The qualitative evidence regarding communication between schools and residential/group homes is limited, but the data gathered suggests that the communication pathways may be a little clearer than those described in the previous section. Group homes have designated individuals whom all parties (schools, caseworkers, case managers) appear to know are responsible for the residential child's schooling—that's what they are "paid to do," one school case manager said. A staff member from the residential care facility explained that they work very closely with the three schools in their district and are familiar with the school's systems in order to facilitate information exchange smoothly and efficiently. For instance, school transfers never take more than three days; usually one or two and teachers send academic progress reports to the group home on a weekly basis to monitor a child's progress.   Residential care facilities also have a ready-made team on site, so they are not in the same position of lone parents trying to seek information and support from a caseworker. The residential care manager shared an example of the communication process in relation to a child who had academic problems:

> We always try to deal with it in house first. So that means case manager, program manager, TR staff and therapist—we all work together and try to develop a plan around this kid, bring the kid in and explain to them what the plan is why we're doing this, what the outcome is that we expect, what participation we expect from them. And if that doesn't work and of course we notify DCFS of what's going on. Some DCFS caseworkers will say "Fine, if it gets worse let me know." Other DCFS caseworkers say "Okay I need to come and talk to him as well."

The residential care case manager felt the responsibility of communication was evenly distributed between the schools and the residential staff. He said that the flow of information happens in both ways, sometimes they call the school and sometimes the school calls them. The DCFS caseworker is also involved, but was described in a more secondary and administrative function. The residential care case manager stated that for children in group homes, DCFS caseworkers "don't really affect the kids' education as much" except when they implement a placement change in or out of the home.

Children in residential care in Chicago also receive increased or additional supports from the education system. The CPS Office of Specialized Services has a program called Initiatives for Children at Risk (I CARE), which, according to their directory of services (available at http://www.cps.k12.il.us/AboutCPS/Departments/OSS/OSS_Directory.pdf) "provides school support services for children who are wards of the state and reside in state-approved residential homes. Staff members act as liaisons between school and home to facilitate appropriate educational services and assist local schools with behavior intervention strategies, behavior management plans and staff development." In accordance with 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226, children in residential care are also eligible to have an educational surrogate appointed for them by the Illinois State Board of Education.[19] This surrogate advocates for the child throughout the special education process. These additional resources or parties were referenced in several of the interviews, and among the respondents who worked with children in residential care, there seemed to be clarity about and appreciation for the availability and roles of these additional resources.

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[19] A foster parent is considered a parent; therefore, a child residing with a foster parent is not automatically eligible to have a surrogate parent appointed to represent him or her in educational matters.

Education Liaisons

Evidence from the qualitative data also suggested that communication between central parties, specifically between DCFS caseworkers and schools, was facilitated when an education liaison was involved in the exchange process. The Educational Access Project is a partnership between the Center for Child Welfare and Education and DCFS. They have two education advisors and one assistant in each of the DCFS regions (there are 3 advisors in Chicago and 3 in the Cook Suburbs).[20] Although this study was not designed to be an evaluation of the Educational Access Project, all respondents were asked about any experiences working with an education liaison. In addition to talking about DCFS education liaisons, some respondents also discussed experiences working with education liaisons who were employed by private child welfare agencies.

Nine of the twelve DCFS caseworkers we interviewed described having worked with an education liaison, most often in the process of securing special education services for a child. Eight of these nine workers found the liaison helped in facilitating communication, retrieving information, and ultimately saving the caseworker time. One caseworker worked with educational liaison when a youth on her caseload required legal representation due to an incident that happened at school. She explained the liaison's assistance:

> He informed me of what steps to take to get representation for him in school and I really appreciated that. He gave me the numbers, he faxed over the information for me and made it a lot easier for me to be able to help him with that...Very! Very useful, because as caseworkers we don't have a lot of time to do a whole lot of stuff.

Several DCFS caseworkers found that the liaison was able to get things done for them:

> I think the department is working well by having liaisons, but I don't know if they have enough liaisons to do the job that needs to be done...Usually when you have the advocate, the DCFS liaison involved, it send up more antennas and they treat you a little bit better. The school people do because she has more buttons that she can push than you do.

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[20] See the CCWE website at http://www.cedu.niu.edu/ccwe/edaccess.htm for more information about this program.

Many felt the education liaison was better informed about the school and the special education process:

> It's helpful, it takes . . . stress factors down knowing you got this education liaison that can help you think clearly instead of just reaching in to a meeting not knowing what to expect. The right questions to ask, because sometimes in this given situation when I had the education liaison sit in with me, I sat back and let her ask the questions because she knew what questions needed to be asked to trigger something to happen. So a lot of times, sometimes it's okay to just be not heard from and let her do the talking and it helps.

One of the school case managers found the DCFS education liaisons useful in helping parents understand the process and "come in to advocate for the parents."

A couple of DCFS caseworkers (one who found the liaison useful, and one who was neutral on the subject) described the involvement of the education liaison as just "paperwork." As one caseworker said, "it is nice that she sends out those forms, she saves me some time there." The other caseworker didn't understand what the education liaison's role was, outside of paperwork assistance.

> Well, it was an experience of getting the paperwork to her doing the contact and then her contacting me to contact the people that she contacted and that was what happened….I'm not quite sure what the educational liaison's role is. I can only tell you what I've experienced…My experience was that I had to do paperwork and I had to turn in the paperwork to the person that I contacted. And that person that I contacted turns it into the educational liaison.

Three of the nine foster parents mentioned they had helpful experience with an education liaison, specifically in facilitating communication with the schools. Two parents mentioned the instrumental role of the DCFS education liaison in helping with special education services. In both cases, the liaison assisted the parent in making recommendations during the special education IEP process. The other parent talked about the aid she received from an education liaison trying to enroll her foster children in new schools when she couldn't take off work to do the necessary legwork:

He was the one that ran around like a chicken with his head cut off trying to get the children into school at the last minute….Getting their transcript, calling the schools to see what schools had openings and he was running against brick walls. That's when I found out DCFS had no type of clout when it comes to the school system... Yes 'cause he did a lot of the legwork, like calling the schools to see what school had open slots to get the children in…I couldn't take off at the last minute to do that.

Again, this study was not designed to systematically evaluate the role of education liaison, and a number of respondents reported no experiences working with such a liaison (33% of DCFS caseworkers, 60% of foster parents, and 40% of CPS case managers). However, many of those who did speak about their experiences indicated that the liaison facilitated communication and was especially useful in circumstances involving special education referrals, evaluations, and reviews.

School Mobility

Changing schools can be disruptive to students' progress in many ways, particularly when those changes occur during the school year or when there are multiple school moves throughout students' educational careers. Previous research has shown significant associations between school mobility and poorer academic performance on all three of the indicators used in this report (Haverman, 1991; Heinlein & Shinn, 2000; Kealy, 1982; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004; Schuler, 1990). School moves not only disrupt the continuity of educational instruction but they also require significant social adjustments as children's relationships with peers and supportive adults shift.

Mobility among CPS Students in Out-of-Home Care

We began the quantitative analyses by assessing the extent to which children in care changed schools during an academic year and during a 12-month period from September to September for 2001 to 2003. The next three tables display data on school mobility among elementary school

students and its relationship to the following: out-of-home care entry and exit experiences and the amount of time in care, the type of placement(s) in which the child has resided, and changes in the child's residence or placement location. This information is helpful in understanding how, whether, and for whom we might try to increase school stability or support those school transitions that are necessary.

Perhaps the clearest finding is that school mobility is highest among those students who are entering foster care (over two-thirds change schools), somewhat lower for children in care for two or more years (28%) and those exiting care (20 to 25%), and lowest among other CPS students (12%; see Table 13). Students in permanent placements are nearly as stable during the school year as other CPS students, with about14 percent changing schools; students who have been abused or neglected—about 20 percent of whom are changing schools—are more mobile than other CPS students and those in permanent placement but less mobile than students in care. The association between the year of entry into out-of-home care and school changes led us to investigate the possibility that placement type and placement mobility may contribute to students in care changing schools during the school year.

Table 13. School Mobility among Elementary School Students for the 2001 through 2003 School Years by Length of Time in Out-of-Home Care

Type of Placement(s) while in Foster Care	N	School Mobility				
		No Change (%)	Changed Schools within CPS (%)	Entered the CPS System during the School Year (%)	Exited the CPS System during the School Year (%)	Unable to Track* (%)
Entered Out-of-Home Care During the School Year						
2001 School Year	451	33	36	13	17	1
2002 School Year	453	37	32	13	18	0
2003 School Year	395	27	36	13	24	1
In Care Less than a Year prior to Start of Current School Year						
2001 School Year	425	63	16	8	12	2
2002 School Year	476	65	15	5	14	1
2003 School Year	431	70	13	5	11	1
In Care Between 1 and 2 Years Prior to Start of Current School Year						
2001 School Year	542	71	17	5	7	1
2002 School Year	358	72	10	5	11	2
2003 School Year	386	73	10	5	10	2
In Care More than 2 Years Prior to Start of Current School Year						
2001 School Year	3,125	74	12	4	7	4
2002 School Year	2,513	73	11	5	7	4
2003 School Year	1,904	72	10	5	9	4
Exited Out-of-Home Care During the School Year						
2001 School Year	758	80	11	2	6	1
2002 School Year	671	78	11	4	5	1
2003 School Year	540	75	10	4	9	2
All Students in Out-of-Home Care						
2001 School Year	5,301	70	14	5	8	3
2002 School Year	4,471	69	14	6	9	3
2003 School Year	3,656	67	13	6	11	3
Abused or Neglected						
2001 School Year	20,989	81	10	3	5	1
2002 School Year	20,802	81	10	3	5	1
2003 School Year	20,571	80	10	3	6	1
Permanent Placement						
2001 School Year	11,091	86	8	2	4	1
2002 School Year	11,261	87	7	2	4	1
2003 School Year	11,321	85	8	2	4	1
CPS Students with No Contact with DCFS						
2001 School Year	260,512	88	5	3	4	0
2002 School Year	261,412	88	5	3	4	0
2003 School Year	260,989	88	5	2	4	0

* These students are enrolled in private tuition schools in both September and June of the school year. Chicago Public Schools do not track movements among private tuition schools.

Table 14 shows school mobility during the academic year among elementary school students in out-of-home care by the type of placement(s) in which these children have lived since entering foster care (See Appendix C for more detailed information about how type of placement was determined). Because students entering care change schools at a higher rate, they were excluded from these analyses, providing an assessment of whether the history of placements was related to school mobility independent of children's entry into care. Children who spend their time primarily in relative foster homes are the most stable; with overall school mobility rates very similar to those presented earlier for other CPS students. The proportion of children changing schools is only moderately higher among those who are in non-relative homes (approximately 20 to 23 percent change schools). Mobility rates for students who have been in relative and non-relative care or been institutionalized for over 30 days hover around 30 and 40 percent, respectively, and are well above the mobility rates of other CPS students. Youth who are institutionalized for the majority of their time in care, however, have very unstable school experiences. Even if we err on the conservative side and assume that the 18 to 20 percent of students in private schools (for which school mobility information is not available) remain in the same school, the data suggest that approximately 50 percent of youth that spend their time primarily in institutional care are changing schools during the school year.

Table 14. School Mobility among Elementary School Students for the 2001 through 2003 School Years by Students' Type of Placement(s) While in Foster Care (Excluding Students who Entered Foster Care during the School Year)

Type of Placement(s) while in Foster Care	N	No Change (%)	Changed Schools within CPS (%)	Entered the CPS System during the School Year (%)	Exited the CPS System during the School Year (%)	Unable to Track* (%)
School Mobility						
Primarily Relative Foster Care						
2001 School Year	1,395	87	8	1	3	0
2002 School Year	1,020	87	8	1	3	1
2003 School Year	778	89	5	1	4	0
Primarily Non-Relative Foster Care						
2001 School Year	540	77	11	3	8	2
2002 School Year	527	80	9	3	6	2
2003 School Year	490	76	13	3	6	2
Both Relative and Non-Relative Foster Care						
2001 School Year	1,292	70	15	5	8	2
2002 School Year	1,084	71	14	5	8	1
2003 School Year	860	73	12	6	9	2
Majority of Time in Care is Spent in an Institutionalized Setting						
2001 School Year	318	28	19	11	23	19
2002 School Year	295	27	13	13	27	20
2003 School Year	244	23	16	13	23	26
Multiple Placements and 30 or More Days Spent in an Institutionalized Setting						
2001 School Year	373	60	17	10	9	4
2002 School Year	319	61	15	8	12	4
2003 School Year	274	61	12	9	15	4
Other Placements						
2001 School Year	932	77	12	3	6	2
2002 School Year	773	74	12	5	7	2
2003 School Year	615	72	10	5	11	1

Given that a significant portion of school mobility is occurring in the year of entry into care, we examined the extent to which any placement location change was also associated with a school change (see Table 15).[21] In addition to entry into and exit from foster care, placement changes included situations in which the child's provider changed or the child's provider remained the same but changed addresses. During an academic year, about 40 percent of

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[21] When citing percentages in this analysis, we assume that students whose mobility we are unable to track are stable.

students who experienced one location change and two-thirds students who experienced two

location changes also changed schools. Small percentages (13 to 14% each year) of students are

experiencing school changes without having changed locations. These school mobility patterns

are fairly consistent over the last 3 years, and this reinforces the point that changes in placement

location contribute to school mobility. For instance, students who spent the majority of their

time in an institutionalized setting were found to be more mobile than other students in care.

Specifically, about one-quarter of them experienced two or more changes in their placement

location during the year, compared between 5 and 11 percent of children in other placement

types.

Table 15. School Mobility and Foster Care Placement Changes

Number of Locations at Which a Child in Care Lived*	N	No Change (%)	Changed Schools within CPS (%)	Entered the CPS System during the School Year (%)	Exited the CPS System during the School Year (%)	Unable to Track (%)
One						
2001 School Year	3,051	83	7	2	4	3
2002 School Year	2,362	83	6	3	5	3
2003 School Year	1,941	83	5	3	5	4
Two						
2001 School Year	1,787	59	21	7	12	1
2002 School Year	1,623	60	20	8	11	2
2003 School Year	1,294	56	20	8	15	2
Three or More						
2001 School Year	462	25	36	15	22	3
2002 School Year	486	35	28	13	22	2
2003 School Year	421	30	30	12	24	4

*The count of locations includes the child's location prior to entry to or after exit from care. Therefore, children in the "One" group were all in care the entire school year and did not change locations during that time. Children who entered or exited foster care but did not otherwise move during their time in care would be included in the category labeled "Two."

We also examined the extent to which the schools that elementary students in care were

moving to during the school year tended to serve more than 10 students in care. Remembering

that 62 percent of students in care enroll in elementary schools serving 10 or more students in

care, around 60 percent of students in care who changed schools within the CPS system during

the 2002-2003 school year moved into a school serving 10 or more students in care. About 37 percent of the school changes resulted in students in care enrolling in schools serving 15 or more students in care. The concentration of students in care in a certain set of CPS schools, coupled with the tendency of students in care to move between these schools, may present opportunities for the development and implementation of targeted interventions within these schools.

The Process of School Changes: Roles, Responsibilities, and Experiences

The qualitative interviews elicited several possible explanations for why children experience school change and what the process of changing schools is like for caregivers, children, and DCFS caseworkers. Among the nine foster parents, seven experienced school changes with children placed in their care—six upon entry into care and one when the foster parent moved, mirroring the patterns found in the administrative data. The two foster parents who were caring for children who continued attending their previous schools even after entry into out-of-home care resided in areas outside Chicago.

The reasons for deciding to change schools that emerged from foster parent interviews were the proximity of old schools to the current placement and the logistics of getting the child to school. One foster parent echoed the general sentiments that were expressed by all seven parents:

> Convenient, correct…for convenience   …For me it's difficult to take a school that's on the other side of town because if something happens to one of the kids I have to find a way to go get them all the way across town. If like they got sick or something happened. I have a day care. I can't load up eight kids in a car and go pick up a kid from school. So I want the school that's closest to me and there's been a couple of occasions where that has not happened. Where they've sent'm to other schools. And then when they call and say you have a child that's sick, you need to come get'm, I say I'm sorry you need to bring'm home. And they don't…they just let'm sit in the nurses office until school's out.

Another parent explained that she tried to keep her two foster children at their old school, but found transporting her two foster children 30-40 minutes every day to school in addition to transporting her four children to a different school not only difficult, but also financially burdensome:

> I tried [to keep them at the old school] but DCFS wasn't giving me funds to take the kids back and forth and it was a struggle getting them out there and then get my kids, come back to the city, get my children ready, I couldn't do it any more. So I put in a request for them to be transferred… I made the drive, with all six of the kids at the time, but I couldn't do it anymore, no one was giving me any money and I was on unemployment at the time, so I couldn't do it.

All the foster parents who had a child who changed schools believed the change in schools was necessary because of difficulties related to transporting their children over a great distance. In addition, many indicated that the "closer" school in which they chose to enroll the child was a school familiar to the foster parent. Four of the seven foster parents indicated that they had other children in the home who attended that school, that other relatives' children attended there, or that they themselves had attended that school.

The process of transferring children from one school to another varied slightly for different parents. Only one of the seven foster parents described that process as "easy" and reported that they either already had the proper documentation or whatever else was needed was already at the new school. Rarely was the required documentation readily available to the foster parent. Six foster parents described the enrollment process as being tolerable, complex, and/or difficult, and felt as if they were getting the "runaround" as they attempted to get the required documentation to enroll a child into a new school. Foster parents described trouble getting materials such as transcripts, transfer papers, immunization records, special education forms, social security numbers, and guardianship papers. As one foster parent, who described the enrollment process as "a little hard" said, "It [the enrollment process] was a one-day transition

that normally would have taken about a couple weeks..." In this particular case, the mother was heavily involved with the local school council for the school in which she wanted to enroll the child, so she received a great deal of help from school officials in facilitating the transfer quickly.

According to DCFS caseworkers, foster parents, and even school staff, school changes and enrollments requiring the transfer of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or special education service plan documentation could be especially problematic, sometimes resulting in disrupted or even discontinued education or supportive services. One of the school staff members relayed an experience in which an evaluation had gotten lost for several years:

> In reviewing their records [DCFS] found that the student had a previous psychological evaluation done. We did a little searching and I did a little status search on our computer and found out that she entered CPS 3 years ago and entered a high school and she was still a freshman so she had no credits for 3 years. Knowing that she had a previous psychological done, we put together that she must have been evaluated. We contacted the suburban school district and sure enough they found records of her evaluation and her actually being eligible for special ed services and receiving special ed services. And those services never transferred to Chicago. The only way that they would not transfer is that DCFS has never informed CPS that the student was actually special ed. Or they did and nobody ever entered the information into the computer and nobody ever followed through with the documentation.

In another case involving a school change for a child with special education needs, the DCFS caseworker reported that the child

> Had to have another IEP staffing to see if they could give him the same services that were outlined in the former IEP from the suburbs. He had to wait…for them to staff him, do a new IEP…[he] was out of school for a month.

Similarly, one of the foster parents reported that her child missed school for a week because "they had to wait on special papers because they're special education."

As already suggested in some of the previous quotations, the transfer of information across school districts seemed particularly problematic. According to a DCFS caseworker,

> …Used to be a time where a kid could leave from one school to another and you could have a copy of the file that that school had and take that same file… and it

would be no problem with enrollment. But now, we got south suburban schools have certain specifics that they will not yield, that they want in a kid's folder. And you have city schools that say, "well you know, we have to have this." So it depends on what the individual school's preference is. …A lot of times they want things in original form. When we deal with our kind'a kid, lot a stuff, we might not have an original form. We're lucky to have a copy. Because of the number of movements between agencies, and workers and the kid himself.

Foster parents involved in the process of enrolling a child in a new school all felt they were not only the initiator for the change, but also were responsible for taking the lead and making sure the transfer transpired. School officials were described as participating only by providing information to the parent about what type of documentation was needed in order to facilitate the school transfer. In both parents' and DCFS caseworkers' account of the process, the role of the DCFS caseworker was typically described as providing documentation assistance when and if asked for by the foster parents. However, from both foster parents' and DCFS caseworkers' accounts of the enrollment process, the primary responsibility for enrolling the student remained with the foster parent. One parent said that she was alone in the process altogether, not receiving any help from the child's previous schools, the child's DCFS caseworker, or DCFS. Other parents spoke of situations similar to the one described by this parent:

> [The school] asked me about the information [needed to enroll the child]…
> I called [the caseworker] and he knew the school that [the children] had came from, so I guess he went and got the transcripts that he needed to provide for the school…I thought they should'a been there as soon as they brought [the children] to me.

DCFS caseworkers' accounts typically supported parents' accounts of the enrollment process, in which parents take the active lead in changing the children's schools. One DCFS caseworker detailed:

> …the school informed the current foster parent of what it is that they needed [to enroll the child] and that current foster parent in turn called me and I faxed it to the school…So, between the foster parent and myself and a counselor we got him

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in school…I didn't do a total of everything…because I just did the follow-up. And when I did the follow-up there was some final things that I have that they [the foster parents] needed for him to get into school.

Caseworkers took more of a leading role when foster parents were unavailable (e.g., the parent worked, when the parent was having trouble with the process, or in one case when the DCFS caseworker was anxious to get a child into a particular school that could address the child's needs). For example, one parent explained that the DCFS caseworker "took-over" the process when she called the DCFS caseworker to say that she wasn't going to try to enroll the child any more because she was "getting the run around" from the old and new school concerning the necessary documentation. In another case with enrolling a special needs child, the DCFS caseworker explained he decided to "step-in" rather than take the normal course of letting the parent take the lead, to ensure the child got in a school that could serve his needs. The DCFS caseworker explained:

> Foster parents, especially when we're moving these kids from home to home, they don't really know these kids whatsoever; they just go to the parent education center and say I've got a kid who's BD, here's his last IEP from what the caseworker gave me. But this time, [with this child], I wanted to try and get him into a school other than the last school that he was in…into a school that would probably better address his behavior disorder…I'm just saying, as a caseworker I stepped in and made sure that he was at a school that would better address his issues.

What happens to the children while parents and DCFS caseworkers are focused on the enrollment process? Six of the seven foster parents who had a child in their care that changed schools reported that the child missed school days during the enrollment process, with the number of days missed ranging from 1 day to 2 weeks. Six of the DCFS caseworkers also indicated in the examples they provided of children changing schools that the children missed school days. The reasons for the missed school days related to the delay in receiving and sending the necessary paperwork and documentation to the proper parties. Parents said that at

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times they had to leave messages for DCFS caseworkers and wait until the caseworkers

responded to their request. DCFS caseworkers also commented on timing issues that lead to

delays in documentation—the caseworker may have been on vacation or in the field, or the foster

parents had trouble finding the time to contact the proper sources given their own work

schedules.

Although many foster parents said there was not much of a problem with missed days of

school, one DCFS caseworker expressed concern about moving children at certain points of the

year, even though at times it is out of the worker's control because the parents move or parents

want the child out of the house:

> Certain points in the school year are critical and you can really screw a kid up if
> you move a child 3 weeks before the end of a semester. In [this child's] case
> when we moved him, he failed every class when he left from the south suburbs to
> Chicago, because it was a critical point of a semester. The same rules apply for
> him as any other school. If you miss more than three days of a particular class
> you failed it. There are not exceptions. So he walked in the door failing all of his
> classes and when he was in the South Suburbs this was a 'B', 'C' student. So
> now his GPA is down…So his grades have suffered tremendously.

Another foster parent articulated concerns about the impact of school changes in terms of

the social-emotional impact on the child and ultimately the child's academic performance:

> They [the kids] were upset. They wanted to know why they couldn't stay at the
> school that they were at. The 13-year-old was in the seventh grade. I pulled him
> out of there and I'm sure he wanted to be with his class that he had been with and
> graduate from eighth grade out there but that was too far south. So they were in a
> transition, forced to make friends at the elementary school. Even though he can
> do the work, his grades are not there because of what he's dealing with at this new
> school.

One of the school case managers echoed these sentiments about the impact on the kids

and advocated for more support in school transitions:

> The caseworker is making her average round of calls because she has three, four
> kids that has to be placed that day. What do they offer that parent when they
> bring them? Absolutely nothing! They give you three bodies, they give you your
> forms saying that you now have some kind of legal custody and then they take

off. Every time you go to a new school, you know what it's like to be the new kid, it sets you back. They need a transition time and usually the counseling services don't start until months after or until the complaints start. Why must we have a complaint before we do something? So when they drop them off, they should drop them off with—and they will be going to counseling on this day, and they'll be seeing this tutor at this location—know your area. Where the library happens to be, what the school has to offer, after program activities for your kids.

School Mobility: Summary of Findings

In summary, transitions and the movement of kids across both the school and child welfare systems emerged as a key issue in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. Who took on the process of getting the child enrolled in a new school and the ease of that process varied considerably, and roles did not appear clearly defined for DCFS caseworkers or foster parents.

In the interviews, respondents told of significant problems with transferring information and documentation between the education and child welfare systems, particularly around enrollment and special education services. The impact of these school transfers on the children's educational performance ranged from minor disruptions such as missing a couple days of school to serious problems with long-term consequences such as broken peer relations, weeks of school absences, and misplaced special education services.

In California, recent legislative changes address concerns about school enrollment. Specifically, Education Code AB 490, effective January 1, 2004, established a policy that foster children should be enrolled in school immediately even if the typically required documentation is not available. Furthermore, students are not to be penalized for school absences that result from placement changes or court-related activities.

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Special Education Classifications

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A national study of the well-being of children involved with the child welfare system suggests that these children exhibit higher levels of emotional and behavior problems than their peers

(Kortenkamp & Ehrle, 2002). Studies have also found that children in care are significantly more likely than their peers to have school behavior problems and that they have high rates of suspensions and expulsions from school (Barber & Delfabbro, 2003; Dubowitz & Sawyer, 1994; Zima, et al., 2000).

Previous statewide research on children in out-of-home care in Illinois revealed that children in foster care were significantly more likely than children in the general population to have a special education classification due to an emotional or behavioral disturbance (Goerge, VanVoorhis, Grant, Casey, & Robinson, 1992). In this section of the report, we examine the prevalence of special education diagnoses among children in out-of-home care in CPS and the specific diagnoses that are disproportionately represented among these children. We also use data from the interviews with DCFS caseworkers, foster parents, and school staff to examine the process of and participants' experiences in special education evaluations or Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

The Extent and Nature of Special Education Classifications Among CPS Students in Out-of-Home Care

With respect to special education classification, nearly half (45%) of sixth- through eighth-grade students in out-of-home care have been classified as disabled (see Table 16). This is much higher than the proportion of other CPS students, approximately 16 percent of whom have been classified as disabled, and also higher than the proportion observed among students who have been abused or neglected or resided in permanent placements, 30 percent of whom were so classified. Younger students in care were also much more likely to be classified as disabled than their peers who were not involved with DCFS. About 19 percent of students in care in first grade were classified as disabled compared to about 7 percent of other CPS students.

An examination of the students' primary diagnosis or special education classification revealed that students in out-of-home care are much more likely to be classified as having an emotional or behavioral disorder (EBD) than other CPS students.[22] The classification of EBD indicates that students displayed significant behavioral problems at school. Nearly one-fifth of seventh- and eighth-grade students in care were diagnosed with an EBD, compared to only 1 to 2 percent of the general CPS population. Even though students in care made up less than 1 percent of all first through eighth graders, 10 percent of first through eighth graders classified as having an EBD were in out-of-home care. Students in permanent placements and students who were abused and neglected were also much more likely to be classified as EBD. Specifically, 6 percent of eighth graders in a permanent placement and 5 percent of eighth graders who had been abused or neglected were classified as EBD. Combining students in care with students in permanent placement and students who have been abused and neglected reveals that nearly 40 percent of all first through eighth graders classified as EBD in CPS have been abused and neglected and/or placed in care. In addition to displaying behavioral problems, students classified as EBD are struggling academically. Nearly three-fourths of third through eighth graders in care and classified as EBD were scoring in the bottom quartile on the ITBS reading section and over 90 percent were scoring below national norms for their grade.

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[22] The label EBD is used here because that is how these records are coded in the administrative data; however, CPS has changed that classification or label to Behavioral Disorder or BD.

Table 16. Percent of Students Classified as Disabled and Receiving Special Education Services in June 2003

	Number of Students (*N*)	Not Classified (%)	Classified as Learning Disabled (%)	Classified as Having an Emotional Behavior Disorder (%)	Classified with Another Type of Disability (%)
First Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	415	81	6	3	10
Permanent Placement	812	85	4	2	9
Abuse/Neglect	1,891	90	2	1	7
Other CPS	32,773	93	2	0.4	5
Second Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	388	73	9	9	9
Permanent Placement	988	86	5	2	7
Abuse/Neglect	2,278	88	4	2	7
Other CPS	32,397	92	3	0.5	5
Third Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	491	70	14	7	8
Permanent Placement	1,597	81	9	3	7
Abuse/Neglect	3,154	86	7	2	5
Other CPS	36,262	90	5	1	4
Fourth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	385	64	18	12	6
Permanent Placement	1,271	75	12	4	8
Abuse/Neglect	2,380	80	11	3	6
Other CPS	30,144	88	7	1	4
Fifth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	369	66	19	11	4
Permanent Placement	1,426	77	13	4	6
Abuse/Neglect	2,436	79	11	4	6
Other CPS	30,516	87	8	1	4
Sixth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	442	56	22	15	7
Permanent Placement	1,823	75	13	6	6
Abuse/Neglect	2,723	80	12	3	5
Other CPS	32,784	87	9	1	3
Seventh Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	379	55	20	21	5
Permanent Placement	1,390	69	16	7	8
Abuse/Neglect	2,128	73	15	6	6
Other CPS	27,118	84	11	1	3
Eighth Grade					
Out-of-Home Care	395	55	19	18	8
Permanent Placement	1,542	70	18	6	6
Abuse/Neglect	2,360	72	16	5	7
Other CPS	27,549	84	12	2	3

Another major special education classification among students in out-of-home care is

learning disabled (LD). Approximately 20 percent of students in care (compared to 12% of other

CPS students) are classified as LD by the eighth grade. In general, the percent of eighth graders in CPS classified as learning disabled has increased dramatically over the last 10 years from 7.7 percent in 1993 to 11.6 percent in 2003. This increase is partially driven by the implementation of promotional requirements in the third, sixth, and eighth grade (Miller & Gladden, 2002). Specifically, the classification of students retained in the same grade as learning disabled has increased as well as the number of students retained. Because retention is driven by low achievement in reading and math on standardized tests, low achievement is the driving factor behind most referrals and diagnoses. Thus, the high classification rate of students in care as learning disabled is part of a larger trend to classify low-achieving students in CPS as disabled. Consequently, the higher classification rates of students in care partially results from their lower achievement. For instance, nearly three-fourths of third through eighth graders in care who are classified as learning disabled are scoring in the bottom quartile on reading and 95 percent are scoring below national norms on reading. Because the diagnostic criteria for classifying a student as learning disabled partially rely on a discrepancy between their school achievement and measures of intelligence such as IQ, the diagnosis has been criticized for over-classifying low-achieving students as disabled.

Controlling for age, students in care were three and half times more likely to be placed in special education than other CPS students (See Table 17, Model 1). Students who were in a permanent placement and students who were abused and neglected were almost two times and one and half times, respectively, more likely to be classified as disabled than other CPS students. Even though large and significant differences in the rate of classification existed for students in permanent placements and students who had been abused neglected, students in care were much more likely to be classified as disabled than either of these two groups of students.

Table 17. Changes in Likelihood of Having a Special Education Classification after Controlling for Demographic Factors and School Enrollment

Contact with DCFS	Model 1 Special Education Classification Differences Controlling for Age	Model 2 Special Education Classification Differences Controlling for Demographic and School Factors	Percent Change from Model 1 to Model 2 (%)
Model Intercept	-1.99	-2.14	
Currently in Out-of-Home Care			
Coefficient	1.29	1.24	4
Odds Ratio	3.6	3.5	
Abused/Neglected and Not Placed			
Coefficient	.47	.45	4
Odds Ratio	1.6	1.5	
Currently in Permanent Placement			
Coefficient	.73	.70	4
Odds Ratio	2.1	2.0	

*See Appendix G for a detailed description of these models.

The differences in the rates of placement in special education among CPS students, students in care, students in permanent placement, and students who have been abused or neglected remained relatively stable even when demographic controls were entered into the model and students who have had contact with DCFS were compared against students in the same school (See Table 17, Model 2). This is due to the fact that classification of students as disabled is more strongly related to student achievement, behavior, and progress through school than to demographic characteristics.

The IEP Process and Different Parties' Roles

Analysis from the administrative data indicates that students in foster care are more likely to be classified as receiving special education. What the administrative data do not indicate is who is involved in the special education process and how that process operates. In this section, data

collected from the qualitative interviews will help illuminate the IEP process, the level of

participation by foster parents and caseworkers, and participants' understanding of their roles.

Interviews with DCFS caseworkers, school staff, and caregivers suggested that there are

many parties involved in the IEP process. Study participants described the participation of

teachers, school case managers, DCFS workers, school counselors, school psychologists,

psychiatrists, therapists, school nurses, foster parents, the child, and other relatives of the child.

According to one DCFS caseworker described:

> All of the people, all of the parties involved with him [the foster child] would be
> involved in the [IEP] meeting. Not the principal, but maybe the liaison from
> DCFS, the group home person or the foster parent (if there is a parent involved),
> or someone who has a relationship with the child (who knows the child), child's
> teachers, and DCFS caseworker.

Although several parties are typically involved in the IEP process and meeting, there are

differing ideas about the roles of DCFS caseworkers, parents, and school staff in the IEP process.

The Role of DCFS Caseworkers

School staff, caregivers, and DCFS caseworkers themselves, characterized the role of the DCFS

caseworker using two typologies: an active "advocate" and a more passive "administrator." All

of the DCFS caseworkers were able to speak to their involvement in processes related to getting

special education services to children (e.g., assessments and case studies). Eleven of the 12

DCFS caseworkers were able to give specific examples about their involvement in an IEP

process for children on their current caseload. Most of these DCFS caseworkers (7 of the 11)

described their role as being more akin to an administrator whose purpose was to collect records,

attend some meetings, possibly provide some history of the child, and conduct mandated follow-

ups with the school. As many said, their job "is just keeping up with the school." They

described their role as one of an overseer of sorts. One DCFS caseworker explains:

I generally am not involved in the development of the IEP unless I see some type of hole or gap in services or something…and so far the kids that I have with IEPs, the IEPs have been pretty comprehensive so I haven't had [to say anything]. I've just been there to go over the IEPs and get an understanding of what the kids are working on...but not really getting into the involvement of developing the IEP.

Another DCFS caseworker also described her role in the IEP as being a manager of the process, rather than having a primary responsibility to initiate, develop, or assess the IEP.

My involvement is really pretty minimal. They [the school] pretty much have the goals of the IEP written up and know where they want to go. They are open to input but it's not like I'm going in there and tell them how to write their IEP.

Several DCFS caseworkers felt that it is difficult to be an advocate, even if they want to, because of the limited knowledge they may have of the child, the limited time they have as DCFS caseworkers and/or the school's already predetermined plan of action. One DCFS caseworker explained:

My role is to attend the IEP meeting, and pretty much just listen to what they got to say…If I have any objections then I state them…I've never had them change their minds or anything, it's a test result so it's kind of difficult to fight.

In contrast to the role of the administrator, five of the eleven DCFS caseworkers said their role in the IEP process was one of an advocate, in which they actively initiate, promote, support, and design the IEP for the child. These DCFS caseworkers felt it was their responsibility to make decisions and plans in the IEP process. For example, one DCFS caseworker explained that she was heavily involved in the planning of what academic courses a child was going to take and what particular classes she would be mainstreamed in or not. Another DCFS caseworker detailed her perception of the DCFS caseworker's role:

We are there to make decisions as to if they want to take him out of services.   Say if they want to take him out of speech and we feel that he's still having problems with certain words…we then advocate for him… put all of this information together to help make a better decision so if there is outside information or outside resource referrals that he is attending then we make sure the school knows about it....

One particular DCFS caseworker summarized the perception of many: "A lot of our DCFS wards need special ed and it takes a lot of advocating on the part of workers…"

One factor that may influence whether a DCFS caseworker participates as an advocate or an administrator is the level of problems or issues that the DCFS caseworker hears about the target child from the school and/or caregivers. One DCFS caseworker explained that her active role in a child's IEP was actually not characteristic of her typical involvement. She explained:

> I don't think it's typical; we really don't have a whole lot of time for that. Maybe one of the reasons why I'm involved with her is because she is suspended so much; she is in trouble so much.

A couple of the conversations with caregivers confirmed this "only in trouble" rationale regarding the involvement of DCFS caseworkers in the IEP process, as well as the general education process. One foster parent explained:

> Their caseload is so heavy, long as there is no problem you don't hear from them because they have a big caseload. So long as you're not having any problems they tend to set their sights on something that's a little bit more challenging…

School staff, specifically school case managers, viewed DCFS caseworkers' role in the IEP process much the way DCFS caseworkers did, although they were more inclined to describe them in ways that fit with the administrator typology rather than the active advocate. In general, school case managers stated that most child welfare DCFS caseworkers were either somewhere between an advocate and an administrator, or just not involved in the process at all. One case manager's viewpoint echoed the perceptions of all five school case managers:

> …Probably the person least involved [in the IEP process] is the actual DCFS caseworker. It's really sporadic. Some are involved and some aren't. Actually they kind of—some caseworkers almost take it to an extreme where they just make it more difficult—and some are very cooperative and some are just non-existent…There are a few that are very good and do participate and respond to my requests and *at least* call but generally they don't participate—they have other things to do.

As with DCFS caseworkers and foster parents/caregivers, school case managers were more likely to describe a DCFS caseworker as being active in the IEP process when there was a problem with the child and/or caregiver. For example, several school case managers said that DCFS caseworkers were only active in the process if they were at risk of losing the current placement for the child due to the child's behavior or if the foster parent was not involved. One school case manager explained a typical interaction with a DCFS caseworker:

> For the most part they come in and bring in those education reports. Some of them will sit in. I mean we don't have a lot of DCFS workers that sit in on the IEP. Only those when they are generally seeking some type of placement outside of the general high school for the student… I'm not saying they are not involved, but I'm saying a lot of times they do not sit in on the planning...

The prevailing perspective from all school case managers was that the role of DCFS caseworkers in the IEP process was limited, and more aligned to the administrator typology in which they managed paperwork and conducted follow-up procedures with school. One school case manager said of a DCFS caseworker in relation to an IEP process:

> She wanted a progress report, and of course, a copy of the IEP, the individual education plan, just to see how he's doing at least three times a year. She told us that would be her role…to come up, and that was it.

The Role of Foster Parents

Of the nine foster parents that were interviewed, seven of them were caring for, or had cared for, a child who required special education. Five of those seven caregivers said they had been involved in the IEP process by attending meetings and could provide information regarding recommendations that came out of that IEP. A few parents felt that their participation in the process was paramount because otherwise the needs of children in their care could get pushed aside. One foster mother explained:

> I went, I sat in, I expressed my opinions… I fought with him and I argued with them. [The child is] on medication and he's also switched primary classrooms.

He's no longer with his old teacher he's with a new teacher.   He was pretty good about getting back in touch with me and he's doing a lot better. I also got him tutoring in the afternoon at home…I pretty much handle it all. I let [the DCFS caseworker] know what's going on or I yell at her when I can't get something across to somebody else, I need some help over here.

Although most of the parents felt the IEP process and their role in the process was important, several of the parents did not understand what the process was about. Two of the five parents who actively participated in the IEP process admitted that they didn't understand the IEP process, as did two parents who did not attend an IEP meeting. One parent who did not go explained, "The caseworker was there. I didn't sit through that."   This parent continues to explain that to her, the IEP is "just all paperwork." She describes getting the IEP in the mail that she says, is "a lot of terminologies that I didn't understand." Another parent, who attended the IEP process, felt like it was "a lot of wasted time." She explained:

I really don't understand it that well, the IEP…I sit there and I ask questions, but, I find that some of the coordinators just dealing with the IEP don't know it that well. And it's actually an evaluation process, but I'm not that familiar with it… some of it does not pertain to the individual.

Another parent who claimed never to miss an IEP meeting said that the process was never explained to her. She suggested that she was really not part of the decision-making process:

I was lost…I think they had already had it done before I got there and they just kind'a were in a hurry. It seemed to me like they were in a hurry and they just kind of said here's the papers. This is what's what and basically we go straight for the goal and to the plan.

Most parents were explicit about their involvement in the IEP process, but felt the process often left them out. DCFS caseworkers and schools typically expressed that it was vital that parents had a role in the IEP process. DCFS caseworkers often remarked that the foster parent had more intensive contact with the child, and thus more detailed knowledge to share with

the school staff about the child's behavior. As one DCFS caseworker expressed, "It's through

the foster parents that the schools are working." Another DCFS caseworker emphasized the

centrality of the parents' role:

> I think the schools are appropriate by talking with the foster parents [about special
> education] because these kids are in *their* home…cause these are the kids that
> they're raising and bringing up and teaching…These foster parents are
> responsible for these children.…As a worker we have like 24, 25 kids that we're
> working with and we're not able to sit there with a child [at] 10, 8, 7 o'clock in
> the evening, and monitor a child the way the foster parent is…the foster parent is
> the person that is responsible for that…for that aspect.

Although most DCFS caseworkers felt it was the parents' primary role to be part of the

IEP process, one DCFS caseworker recognized that the foster parent might not always be the

best person to promote the child's interest, especially if the foster parent has not cared for the

child very long. He explained:

> I'm not saying the foster parent is not a good one [to advocate for the child in the
> IEP process], but they're not invested in the child possibly as [you are] your own
> child, so…they may not have had the child long enough to know.

The Role of the School

School case managers typically described their role as their job title indicated, the "manager" of

the special education process. They take the request from the teacher, parent, and/or DCFS

caseworker and determine why and how it should move forward. Many school case managers

felt that requests often come from a DCFS caseworker not because of the educational interest of

the child, but for the stability of the current placement. A school case manager explained:

> Maybe the teacher has called home and talked with the foster parent and the foster
> parent is then saying to the caseworker...so they want us to act immediately on
> [the request] because they are at risk for losing placement for the child. And
> unfortunately that's how it comes to us.

This school case manager explained that her role, as staff of the school, was to make sure

that all the files and forms are complete and "make sure they haven't put something like totally

ridiculous like the child must have a laptop computer," in the IEP so that the school is legally

mandated to buy it. The school case manager stated that she made sure that "all parts are making

some sense." As another school case manager described her role, "My job is basically to

complete paperwork, to schedule meetings and to assure that services are being provided."

The provision of services was something DCFS caseworkers, school case managers, and

parents agree was the central role and responsibility of the school. It is also, as many DCFS

caseworkers and special education school case managers pointed out, the legal responsibility of

the school to provide services that are documented in an IEP. The legality of the IEP was one

thing some DCFS caseworkers suggest may actually be a barrier to some children getting

accepted and enrolled in certain schools. A DCFS caseworker summarizes this perspective:

> The schools do understand that the IEP is legally binding….So if they find that
> they can't do something they're gonna tell me no and they'll reject the child [from
> entering their school]… A lot of our DCFS wards need special ed…. [The
> schools] will tell you everything that they can [not to get the child special
> education], especially if they've already set their budget… Their budget is set
> and there's only so much money that they're getting…They try not to go over that
> amount… [Special education] is a very big costly thing. And a lot of our kids are
> not getting it though they require it.

Critical Issues Related to Special Education

The high proportion of students in care classified as needing special education is a complex

phenomenon to interpret because students are placed in special education for multiple reasons,

and the effectiveness of special education in remediating these different needs is unclear. The

findings in this report, however, highlight some important issues around the remediation of

academic problems, behavior difficulties of students in care, and coordination between DCFS

and CPS. The large percentage of students in care being classified as learning disabled is

consistent with a broader trend in CPS to classify a growing number and percent of retained and

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low-achieving students as learning disabled (Miller & Gladden, 2002; Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004).

This trend suggests that special education placement, especially the learning disabled diagnosis, is viewed as a method to remediate academic difficulties. One of the DCFS caseworkers interviewed suggested this, saying "a lot of our kids require special ed just for the mere fact that they have missed so much school and they're so far behind." Although special education does provide students with extra resources, its ability to remediate reading difficulties has been questioned by a recent Chicago report on grade retention, which found that the reading achievement of retained third and sixth graders subsequently placed in special education deteriorated relative to their own test score trajectory before their placement (Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004). Although the report is not a comprehensive evaluation, its findings highlight the perspective that special education placement should not be viewed as the "solution" to low achievement. An examination of other methods to remediate reading and general achievement deficiencies of students in care and how to galvanize special education resources to better address academic problem would be beneficial. As reported earlier, special education diagnoses, however, do appear to prevent some low-achieving students in care from being retained in the same grade in third, sixth, and eighth grades because it exempts them from CPS's promotional requirements in these grades.

The finding that students in care are significantly more likely to be classified as having an emotional or behavioral disorder suggests that students in care are exhibiting disruptive behavior at school and raises the question of whether this behavior is chronic or associated with transitions in living arrangements occasioned by their involvement in out-of-home care. Services and interventions designed to improve children's behavior are more likely to be effective when

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DCFS and CPS coordinate their efforts; however, the qualitative data highlight a series of obstacles that may impede this type of coordination.

Finally, around 6 to 8 percent of students in care are classified with other disabilities, such as speech and hearing problems, autism, or mental impairment. In these instances, it is important that people advocate for students to be diagnosed and receive the appropriate services. Again, communication and coordinated responses by DCFS, the foster parents, and the school system are essential for the services to be effective.

A Closer Look at School-Age Students Entering Out-of-Home Care

A closer examination of students who entered care during the 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 school years was undertaken in order to understand the educational needs of school-age students entering care and to explore whether their educational progress is disrupted during the school year they transition into care.[23] Concern over whether their educational progress may be disrupted was raised by the earlier finding that students in care experience high levels of school mobility when they enter care and the finding that students entering care around age 5 or 6 were more likely to be old for grade in first grade.

During the 2002-2003 school year, around 400 kindergarten through twelfth graders in CPS entered out-of-home care during the school year. The majority of students entering care during the school year entered in early elementary school grades—around 60 percent in fifth grade or earlier. A sizable portion of the students entering care were struggling before they entered care. For instance, over 35 percent of first through eighth graders entering care were already old for grade. This is well above the CPS average of around 18 percent. Combining the

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[23] Three school years were analyzed instead of just the most recent school year because of the low number of students entering care. Looking at the indicators across a few years provides more confidence in the stability of the results.

ITBS reading test scores from the previous year with students' old-for-grade status when they entered care revealed that slightly under two-thirds of third through eighth graders enter care either old for grade or scoring in the bottom quartile in reading (see Table 18)[24]. Moreover, almost a quarter of students in care were both old for grade and scoring in the bottom quartile in reading.

Table 18. Indicators of Academic Difficulties among Third through Eighth Graders Entering Care

	N	No Risk Factors (%)	Bottom Quartile Reading ITBS (%)	Old for Grade (%)	Old for Grade and Bottom Quartile on the ITBS (%)
Entered Care During the School Year					
2001 School Year	262	33	20	21	26
2002 School Year	265	41	21	17	22
2003 School Year	239	35	20	21	24
Abused or Neglected During the School Year					
2001 School Year	904	43	22	17	18
2002 School Year	880	49	20	14	17
2003 School Year	942	49	15	17	18
CPS Students Who Have Not Come in Contact with DCFS					
2001 School Year	174,428	63	16	11	10
2002 School Year	178,103	63	16	11	10
2003 School Year	180,907	63	14	12	11

*Only students actively enrolled in CPS during the school year and the previous May were included in the analysis. Students who did not take the test were assumed to NOT be in the bottom quartile in reading.

Students entering care were also at heightened risk of being retained in the same grade the year after they entered care. Nearly one out of ten students entering care were retained in the same grade the following year, and this is slightly higher than the rate experienced by other students already in care (see Table 19). This finding, coupled with the finding that students

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[24] In order to perform this analysis, students' ITBS test performance from the previous year had to be available. For instance, if a student entered care during fourth grade, her performance before entering care was assessed by analyzing her third grade test. Because ITBS test performance was only collected for first through eighth graders, the analysis of previous test performance could only be conducted on second through eighth graders. Also, the decision was made to further restrict the analyses to third through eight graders because the comparability and reliability of the first grade ITBS test scores was viewed as problematic. Because ITBS testing in second grade was not mandatory, the ITBS performance of some of the third graders entering care was not available and these students consequently had to be excluded from the analyses. Also, the performance of students entering CPS from other school districts was unavailable and excluded from the analysis.

entering care are more likely to change schools, suggests that entering care is a disruptive

academic experience for some students.

Table 19. Percent of First through Eighth Graders Who Entered Care and Were Retained in the Same Grade the Following Year*

	N	**Percent of Students Retained in the Same Grade the Following Year (%)**
Entered Care During the School Year		
2001 School Year	280	12.5
2002 School Year	291	16.5
2003 School Year	222	8.1
Presently in Care		
2001 School Year	3,867	8.5
2002 School Year	3,176	9.4
2003 School Year	2,474	7.6
Abused or Neglected During the School Year		
2001 School Year	1,198	11.1
2002 School Year	1,124	12.1
2003 School Year	1,198	9.9

*Only students actively enrolled in CPS during the school year and the following September were included in the analysis. Only students enrolled in general education schools were included in order to be consistent with previous analyses.

CONCLUSIONS

Across all of the academic achievement indicators examined in this study, there is a relatively consistent and rather alarming picture of the educational experiences of children in out-of-home care. A significant proportion of students in care in Chicago have low achievement test scores. Children in care at age 8 are entering care an average of a year's learning behind other CPS students and are not closing this achievement gap during their elementary school career. Many school age children entering care are already old for grade and children in care are at greater risk of being retained in the same grade the year following their placement. Children in care are also disproportionately likely to change schools, particularly at the time of entering care and also when they experience placement changes. Looking at achievement indicators and school mobility, we see that entering care is a disruptive academic experience for most students, many of whom are already struggling academically. Students in care are significantly more likely than other CPS students to have a special education classification, particularly a classification indicating a behavioral disorder or learning disability. The increased probability of these particular special education classifications may be related to the low achievement of students in care or their experiences entering or in care. Academic and behavioral challenges among children in care are also apparent among high school age students. Those students in care are almost twice as likely to drop out of school as other CPS students, and they are disproportionately likely to be incarcerated.

Other evidence presented in this report suggests that opportunities for the development of strong working relationships with consistent repeated interactions among school staff, caseworkers, and foster parents may be constrained by such factors as the current approach to case assignment, placement instability, and worker turnover. Communication between all of the

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parties involved in these children's education is often complex and ineffective, and sometimes lacking altogether.

Because of the lack of statewide education data, we cannot generalize these findings to all children in care in Illinois with certainty. However, our qualitative interviews in regions outside Chicago support the findings.

The weaker academic performance of school-age students at the time they enter out-of-home care and the lower performance of students who have been abused and neglected suggest that a portion of the academic problems of students in out-of-home care may stem from experiences prior to their entry into care. The academic challenges faced by students in out-of-home care are compounded by the fact that they are clustered in lower performing schools, and finally, factors such as school mobility and poor communication among school staff, caseworkers, and foster parents are further impeding these students' educational progress while in out-of home care.

Together the results of this study highlight the importance of addressing the educational needs and supporting the educational successes of students as they enter and remain in out-of-home care.   Efforts to improve the educational performance and experiences of students in care will require innovative thinking and ongoing collaboration between the child welfare and education systems.

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APPENDIX A

METHODS

METHODS

Administrative Data: Quantitative Analysis

Data Sources and Record Linkage

Quantitative data for this study were pulled from Chapin Hall's Integrated Database or Child and Family Services in Illinois, which contains data from IDCFS's Child and Youth Center Information System (CYCIS) and the Chicago Public Schools Student Information System (CPSSIS). CYCIS was current through December 31, 2003 and CPSSIS was current through September 2003. Because there are no identifiers that directly link students between the two systems, we used a technique called probabilistic record matching. Used widely in epidemiology and demography (Newcombe, 1993; Roos & Wadja, 1991; Roos, Wadja, Nicol, & Roberts, 1992), probabilistic record matching assumes that no comparison between fields common to the source databases will link an individual's records with complete confidence. Instead, the method calculates the likelihood that two records belong to the same person by matching as many pieces of identifying information from each database as possible. The minimum number of fields needed for linking varies with the size of the population and the confidence level desired. In general, more fields provide a higher level of confidence. To match students across the DCFS and CPS databases, we used first and last name, birth date, sex, race, and zip code.[25]

We assessed the quality of the match by examining the match rate of a group of children who were in DCFS care or in permanent placements and were very likely to be enrolled in

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[25] In about 3 percent of the cases, a single child in the CYCIS database was matched to two or more students in the CPSSIS system. In over two-thirds of these cases, the match with both CPSSIS records was maintained because the two students were not enrolled in CPS at the same time or their enrollment only overlapped by a single semester. We retained these duplicate matches because we believe that a student in the CYCIS database may have been assigned two separate student identifiers in the CPSSIS because of school changes and/or family changes. In the other few cases, the child in the CYCIS database was assigned to the CPS student who had been enrolled in the CPS system for the longest time. A similar procedure was used when a student in the CPSSIS database was matched with multiple children in the CYCIS database, less than 2 percent of all cases.

Chicago Public Schools. We defined this group as all children who were DCFS wards or in permanent placements, were between the ages of 6 and 17, and were living in the City of Chicago continuously between February 1, 2000 and May 1, 2000. Of the 19,371 children who met these criteria, 81.6 percent were matched to a student in the CPSSIS data.[26]

Measures of Academic Performance

In this report, we use three different indicators to assess the academic performance of children in out-of-home care. First, we examine elementary students' scores on the reading section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). In the descriptive analyses of students' performance in 2003, only third through eighth graders' reading scores on the ITBS were used because elementary schools are only held accountable for test performance of students' in these grades. Moreover, a sizable portion of first and second graders—especially students receiving special education services—do not take the ITBS.[27] Students scoring in the bottom quartile on the ITBS (i.e., their reading performance places them in the bottom quarter of students nationally in reading) are considered at risk because they are having trouble mastering reading skills, and students with poor reading scores are at high risk of being retained in grades 3, 6, or 8—the grades on which promotional requirements as shown in their ITBS performance, are based.[28]

In the regression analyses of the 2003 ITBS reading scores, students' standard scores are used. The standard score is a continuous achievement scale where a score of 200 is assigned to the median performance at the end of the school year of a national sample of fourth graders and

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[26] The match rate of 81 percent is probably an underestimate of the real match rate because such other reasons as the student dropping out of school or attending a private school explain why some of the records did not match.

[27] A higher percent of students in care are in special education and thus the failure to test many special education students in the first and second grades biases analyses of the performance of students in care.

[28] Students in the third, sixth, and eighth grades need to achieve above a certain cutoff score on the reading section of ITBS to progress into the next grade. Students who fail to reach the cutoff as of June are sent to summer school and re-take the ITBS at the end of the summer. If they do not re-take the test at this point or if they fail to reach the required cutoff, they are retained. Some students who score slightly below the cutoff may be promoted based on other indicators of school performance, such as attendance and classroom performance.

250 is assigned to the median performance at the end of the school year of a national sample of eighth graders.[29] The interpretation of the standard score can be difficult because it has no built-in meaning. In order to overcome this difficulty, Table A1 lists the average gain for fourth through eighth graders over the course of the year. CPS students tend to improve their reading scores over the course of the school year by about 13 to 14 points.[30] Because growth patterns by grade in CPS are slightly different from the national sample, average learning rates for both CPS and the national sample are displayed.

Table A1. Median Gain in the Reading Standard Score Achieved over the School Year by Fourth- through Eighth-Grade Students*

| Grade | Reading ITBS | |
	National Average	CPS Average (1997-2001)
4	15	14.12
5	14	12.75
6	13	9.55
7	12	13.87
8	11	13.20

*This table was downloaded from the Chicago Public School's Department of Research and Evaluation website at http://research.cps.k12.il.us/#; Click on "Read about how CPS Measures Student Gains" in the left margin. Accessed June 20, 2004.

Finally, we conducted longitudinal analyses of students' reading test scores from age 8 to age 13 in order to examine the extent to which students in care were behind other CPS students at age 8 and to assess whether the *reading gains* (i.e., the average yearly improvement registered on the ITBS reading section) of students in care differed from other CPS students.[31] Measuring students' test scores across time poses special challenges because different forms of the ITBS are

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[29] The median score for each grade level is as follows: 150 for first grade, 168 for second grade, 185 for third grade, 200 for fourth grade, 214 for fifth grade, 227 for sixth grade, 238 for seventh grade, and 250 for eighth grade.

[30] An exception to this trend is sixth grade, when CPS students tend to only improve their performance by approximately 10 points.

[31] First grade test scores were not included in the analyses because the growth rates between first and second grade vary to a large extent from year to year, are much larger than other grades, and the equating of the ITBS forms at this grade level was of a poorer quality.

administered each year to the students, and students in different grades receive different levels of the test. Because the difficulty of these forms and levels varies both across time and grade, students' test performance is partially determined by the form and level of the ITBS test administered to them (see (Bryk, Thum, Easton, & Luppescu, March, 1998) for a full discussion of this problem). This measurement problem is exacerbated by the fact that many students are behind grade and therefore are taking different levels of the test than their peers of the same age. Other measurement problems also make the use of the grade equivalent inappropriate (Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004), and the standard scores are only available from 1997 to 2003. In order to measure student academic growth more accurately and address the above challenges, the Consortium on Chicago School Research conducted an extensive equating study and converted the ITBS scores into a logit metric using Rasch models that are comparable across time and within and across test levels (Bryk, Thum, Easton, & Luppescu, March, 1998). With the permission of the Consortium, this study used the Rasch reading scores in its longitudinal analyses of test performance. Rasch-equated test scores are only available from 1991 to 2001.

The second indicator of achievement used in this report is the percent of elementary students who were at least one grade level behind for their age. Whether a student is old for grade is important because it indicates that the child started school late or was retained in a grade. Being old for grade in CPS has also been found to be a very strong predictor of dropping out of high school (Allensworth, April 2004; Roderick, 1994).

Since 1997, CPS students are required to meet a minimal cutoff score on the ITBS reading section in third, sixth, and eighth grade in order to be promoted to the next grade.[32] A sizable percent of students in these grades have failed to reach these criteria, and as a result fallen

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[32] In the 2003-2004, only reading scores on the ITBS are being used to make promotional decisions. Before that date, promotional requirements existed for both the math and reading section of the ITBS.

one or more grades behind (Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004). For students achieving close to the cutoff score, other information such as attendance and school performance is considered. Most students receiving special education services are exempt from this requirement, as are bilingual students who have received 4 or fewer years of bilingual education.[33]

The third and last way in which we measured academic performance was to track high school dropout and graduation rates. Students are considered to have dropped out if they left CPS and no request for a transcript has been made. Some of the students classified as dropouts may be pursuing alternative high school degrees or a GED, but are considered as dropping out because we lack information on these alternative pursuits. In addition, successful completion is often related to poorer workforce and post-secondary outcomes than a standard high school diploma.

Analytic Approach

This section describes the comparison groups and statistical techniques that were employed in an effort to disentangle the extent to which the school achievement findings for children in out-of-home care emerge from their school environment, their previous experiences of abuse and neglect, or their experiences in out-of-home placements.

The primary focus of this report is on the academic progress and performance of students currently in out-of-home care. Children were classified as in out-of-home care if they spent any time in care during the academic school year.[34] Analyses track the overall performance of

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[33] The promotional requirements that students with disabilities need to meet to be promoted to the next grade are determined in their individualized education plan (IEP). These requirements may include performance on the ITBS.

[34] A small percent of students in care, around 1 or 2 percent, were in care for a week or less during the school year because they exited care quickly, entered a permanent placement at the beginning of the school year, or entered care at the end of the school year. Students who spent a week or less in care during the school year were not categorized as in out-of-home care. Students exiting care after a long placement were placed in the permanent placement to which they exited and students who quickly entered and left out-of-home care in a week or less during the school year were counted as experiencing abuse or neglect during the school year.

children in out-of-home care and examine how performance varies across their experiences in care such as placement type and number of placements. These analyses document the educational progress of students in care, highlight areas in which students in care are struggling, and identify placement histories or experiences that are associated with academic problems. A second set of analyses, described below, compares the performance of students in care with other students who have had contact with DCFS and uses statistical procedures to assess the extent to which students in care are performing at levels similar to other students attending the same schools. These analyses begin to explore whether and to what degree differences between students in care and other CPS students are accounted for by demographic factors, school performance, and experiences of abuse and neglect.

In order to place the academic performance of students in care in context, we include data for three other groups of children: those who attend a Chicago public school but never experienced a substantiated report of abuse and neglect after 1987, those who were abused and neglected but not placed in out-of-home care, and those who had once been in out-of-home care and are now in a permanent placement. These three groups are mutually exclusive at any specified point in time. Describing the achievement of students who have been abused and neglected and those in permanent placements is important in its own right because it identifies and highlights the educational performance or experiences of all students who have ever come into contact with the DCFS. However, the interpretation of findings in this report focuses on the relative value of these groups for comparative purposes, described below.

Other CPS Students (Those With No Substantiated History of Maltreatment)

Differences in the academic performance of children in care relative to that of other children in CPS suggest that students' in care face unique educational challenges, some of which may be related to their experiences of abuse or neglect or out-of-home care. However, interpretating

such differences is not straightforward. The complexity arises largely from one of the findings presented later in this report—namely that many of the children in out-of-home care are concentrated in poorer performing schools. Thus, differences between children in care and all other CPS students must take into account the effects of the quality of education in the schools attended by the children. In order to further disentangle these effects, we use an advanced statistical technique called hierarchical linear modeling, which allows us to compare the academic progress of children in care to demographically similar children attending the same schools. If differences between children in care and other CPS students persist in these advanced models, this provides further evidence that students experiencing abuse and neglect and being placed in out-of-home care are struggling academically (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

Children Who Were Abused and Neglected but Not Placed in Out-of-Home Care

If the academic progress or performance of students in care sharply contrasts with that of other children who were abused and neglected but not placed, then we need to investigate how out-of-home placement may be contributing to these differences. Although comparisons between students in care and students who have been abused and neglected may highlight important issues experienced by students in care, the results of these comparisons need to be viewed cautiously because other unmeasured differences such as severity of abuse or neglect may exist. This comparison group is also included in the advanced models, which control for the schools attended by the children. Again, differences between these groups that persist in these advanced models would provide further evidence of the effects of the experience of abuse and neglect above and beyond the educational environment.

Children Who Have Transitioned into Permanent Placements

This third comparison group allows us to look at the long-term performance of students who once had been in care and the extent to which students' transfer from out-of-home care to

permanent placement (and the presumed stability that accompanies that transition) relates to educational progress.

Qualitative Data

Although quantitative techniques provide useful descriptions of the population of children in out-of-home care and allow us to make generalizations and calculate probabilities of certain patterns, they seldom capture the context and processes behind events. In order to learn more about the circumstances of these children, we conducted in-person semi-structured interviews with DCFS caseworkers, foster parents, and school staff (principals and school case managers or school counselors). Because the quantitative educational data were limited to children enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the qualitative interviews also provided an opportunity to assess educational experiences for some children in out-of-home care outside the Chicago area.

Sample Selection

The sampling of interview respondents was conducted differently within and outside the Chicago area. Within Chicago, we used the linked administrative databases from DCFS and CPS to identify the schools that had the largest number of children in out-of-home care.[35] The logic for focusing on these schools was that the presence of more children in out-of-home care in the school would increase the likelihood that staff at these schools would have first-hand interactions with students in out-of-home care and thus be able to discuss those experiences. Thus, purposive sampling was used to select two elementary schools and two high schools in the Chicago area. The number of children who were in out-of-home care and enrolled in these schools between September 1, 2003 and December 31, 2003 ranged from 24 to 55 students and represented any where from 1.8 to 3.1 percent of the student population in those schools. The principals and

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[35] Schools that were sites for the Strategies to Rejuvenate Interest & Value in Education (STRIVE) programs were excluded from the sampling as this study was not intended to be an evaluation of that program and the presence of such a program may have influenced the findings.

school case managers in those schools then received a letter from the head of the Office of Specialized Services at the Board of the Chicago Public Schools encouraging their participation in the study.

Once the Chicago area schools were selected, a table was produced for each school listing numeric identifiers for each student in out-of-home care as well as the foster parent or provider and the DCFS caseworker, and each student record was assigned a random number.

For each school, two DCFS caseworkers were chosen based on having the highest number of children enrolled at that school. When given a choice between two workers with similar numbers of children on their caseload enrolled at the selected school, we stratified the sample by whether the worker was employed by DCFS or a private agency and then selected the workers linked to the student whose record had been assigned the lowest random number. Again, the rationale for choosing the worker linked to the highest number of children at that school was to maximize the likelihood of their being able to discuss experiences with students in out-of-home care enrolled at the selected schools. Similarly, for each of the four schools, we selected two foster parents caring for children enrolled at that school, stratifying the sample according to whether the foster parent was a relative or non-relative. In one of the schools, the majority of placements were in group homes or residential care institutions, so we decided to interview residential care staff in the place of a foster parent. Finally, because we were interested in experiences with special education services, we examined the list of cases linked to the selected DCFS caseworkers and foster parents to ensure that we had a mix of students with and without a special education classification. No changes to the selection were made following this assessment. Contact information for the selected DCFS caseworkers and foster parents was provided by DCFS. Prior to contacting interview subjects by phone, Chapin Hall sent a letter of

introduction stating the purpose of the study and that an interviewer would be contacting them to set up an interview.

Outside the Chicago area, we did not have access to linked school and child welfare case data and were therefore forced to use a convenience sample. Using administrative child welfare data, we identified two geographic areas outside Chicago with larger concentrations of children in out-of-home care and one child welfare agency in each area that was responsible for a large number of cases in that area. Administrative staff within DCFS then contacted administrators in those agencies (both were private agencies that contracted with the DCFS) to introduce the study and to request their cooperation in our efforts to complete interviews. Staff in each of those agencies then provided contact information for two DCFS caseworkers and two foster parents and the name of a school attended by the children whose cases were linked to those DCFS caseworkers and foster parents.

The final list of 36 selected interview respondents included 6 school case managers or counselors, 6 principals, 12 DCFS caseworkers, and 10 foster parents, and 2 residential care staff. Non-response led to a final sample of 31 interviews.[36] Table A2 details the final sample by type of respondent, school, and geographic region.

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[36] The response rate for the original Chicago sample of foster parents, residential care staff, and DCFS caseworkers was 70 percent, 50 percent and 83 percent respectively. The reasons for non-response among foster parents were out-of-date contact information (two cases) and a refusal. Two DCFS caseworkers were unavailable due to month-long required trainings. The residential care provider that did not respond claimed the staff did not work with a child attending the selected school. Replacement cases were drawn for foster parents and caseworkers in order to achieve the goal of having 10 foster parents and 12 caseworkers in the study. In addition, in the areas outside Chicago, the selected school principals, one school counselor, and one foster parent refused to participate in the study. Unfortunately, the short time frame of the study did not permit the selection of a replacement case for the residential care staff or respondents outside of Chicago.

Table A2: Number of Interviews Completed

| Type of Respondent | Chicago | | | | Outside Chicago | | |
	School #1	School #2	School #3	School #4	School #5	School #6	TOTAL
Principal	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
School case manager	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
DCFS caseworker				2	-	-	2
Private agency caseworker	2	2	2		2	2	10
Relative foster parent	1	1	1		-	-	3
Non-relative foster parent	1	1	1		2	1	6
Residential care staff				1	-	-	1
TOTAL	6	6	6	5	5	3	31

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

For the qualitative analysis, data from study participants was collected using a structured, open-ended interview guide in order to ensure that each interviewee was asked the same questions in the same way, including standard probes, so there was consistency across interviewers.[37] Interviews took place in the offices of the respondents the homes of foster parents. Prior to the start of the interview, interviewers provided a full explanation of the study and informed consent procedures. Respondents provided verbal consent, and the interview commenced. Interviews usually lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Topics that were being addressed through analysis of administrative data were used to develop the interview guides. They included perceptions and procedures related to academic performance, attendance, school mobility, special education, and collaboration/communication. Questions and probes aimed at getting the detailed and specific experience of foster parents, school staff, and DCFS caseworkers in order to get information that focused on the context, complexity, and processes related to the core topics. Respondents were asked to speak to their

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[37] A structured protocol also compensated for variability in skills among interviewers and to make sure that respondents' time was used efficiently.

experiences and/or share examples of children or circumstances that related to these major topics and related sub-topics.[38]

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. In addition, interviewers completed a summary sheet on the interview to record some initial data gathered from the interview. Data from interview transcripts and summary notes were organized in a database by respondent type and school. Data was then organized and coded by the same major and minor themes that structured the protocols. (A list of codes is provided in Appendix B). Thematic analysis was used to search for recurring patterns and to identify core consistencies in the data. To check the validity of the codes and interpretations, project staff reviewed data within a code and discussed whether the coded schema and interpretation fit, based on their perspective and substantial knowledge of the topic. Discrepancies were discussed until consensual validation was met.

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[38] It is important to note that although respondents were selected because they were linked to one particular school, they were not asked to detail experiences related to a specific child in that selected school. Respondents were given the freedom to talk about various children they had experience with or situations that they felt were most relevant to the topic at hand.

APPENDIX B

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS CODING LIST

Qualitative Analysis Coding List

The following themes were used in coding all qualitative interviews:

Academic Performance
Background Experience
Behavior Problems
Caseworker
Challenges
Children
Communication Information
Counselor
DCFS
DCFS Education Liaison
Enrollment Process
Environment Culture
Experience with other Schools
Failed Class/Grade
Foster Child Impact on School
Group Home residential care
Mobility Stability
Other
Other Parties
School actors others
Caregivers
Principal
Principal Contact
Responses
Responsibilities
Runaway Child
School
School Characteristics
Skipped School
Special Education_IEP
Successes
Support_Help
Suspension
System Interactions
Teacher
Views of Foster Children
Views of Foster Parents

APPENDIX C

**CATEGORIZATION OF CHILDREN'S TYPE OF PLACEMENT(S) SINCE ENTRY
INTO FOSTER CARE**

CATEGORIZATION OF CHILDREN'S TYPE OF PLACEMENT(S) SINCE ENTRY INTO FOSTER CARE

A variable was created to describe students' placement history in out-of-home care before the school year. The first step in creating this variable was to collapse the placement categories into meaningful categories. Before collapsing the categories, it was decided to exclude a few placements types from the analysis. Specifically, running away placements were excluded because they do not represent a placement. Instead, time spent running away will be treated as a separate variable that will be analyzed in conjunction with students' placement history. The following codes identified runaway placements: RMY, WCC, WUK, and ABD. Placements that were considered temporary and transitory were also excluded. Specifically, detention placements, DET, and hospital/health facility, HHF, were excluded. Finally, placements missing useful descriptive information, UNK, MIS, AND "???" were excluded from the analyses.

After excluding the preceding placement types, five placement type categories were created. The first placement category, relative foster care, captured the time children spent in a relative foster home, coded as HMR or DRA. The second placement category, non-relative foster care, assessed the time children spent in non-relative foster homes, coded as FHB, FHP, FHI, FHA, FHS, or FHT. The third category combined all types of institutionalized placements. Specifically, group home and private institution placements were combined with other types of institutional placements such as mental health hospitals and correctional institutions. Future research may further divide this category. The following codes identified residential placements, IPA, GPH, IDC, IMH, SHL, ICF, YES, IOP, IRS, or NCF. The fourth category grouped independent living placements, coded as ASD, CIL, CUS, ILO, JTP, TLP, YIC, or YIE. The final category combined codes indicating other types of placements, DEC, OTH, PND, and UAP.

Time spent in these five placement categories were used to summarize children's history in out-of-home care before June 1 of the school year examined in an analyses. For instance, if an analysis was assessing the achievement of students in care in the 2002-2003 school year, the placement history variable summarizes children's placement history up until June 1, 2003. Six categories summarized children's placement history. These categories are described in the table below.

Table C1. Decision Rules for Creating Six Categories that Summarize Children's Placement History

Placement History	Description
Primarily Relative Care	The child is coded as only being in relative foster care for their full time in care. Child was institutionalized in one placement when they entered care for less than a month and then moved into relative care for the rest of their time in care. Child spent less than 2 weeks in non-relative care and more than a month in relative care. The child was placed in relative care and then transitioned into an independent living arrangement.
Primarily Non-Relative Care	The child is coded as only being in non-relative foster care for their full time in care. Child was institutionalized in one placement when they entered care for less than a month and then moved into non-relative care for the rest of their time in care. Child spent less than 2 weeks in relative care and more than a month in non-relative care. The child was placed in non-relative care and then transitioned into an independent living arrangement.
Non-relative and Relative care	The child has only been in relative or non-relative care for their entire time in out-of-home care. The child was institutionalized for less than a month in one institutional placement when they entered care and has been in relative or non-relative foster care ever since. The child was placed in both relative and non-relative care and transitioned into an independent living arrangement.
Primarily Institutionalized	The child has spent the majority of their time (i.e., over 50%) in care in an institutionalized setting.
Multiple Placements with Substantial Institutionalization	The child has been assigned to multiple placements and has been in an institutionalized setting for more than a total of 30 days. The majority of his or her time in care, however, has been spent in placements that do not represent institutionalized settings.
Other	The child has only spent her or his time in time in a placement categorized as other or independent living. The child has been in multiple placement types that are not categorized above. The child has spent his or her full time in care running away, detained, in a hospital/health facility, or in placements with missing information.

APPENDIX D

ANALYSES OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, ITBS READING PERFORMANCE IN 2003, OLD FOR GRADE IN 2003, AND DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL BETWEEN 1998 AND 2003, CONTROLLING FOR STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

ANALYSES OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, ITBS READING PERMANCE IN 2003, OLD FOR GRADE IN 2003, AND DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL BETWEEN 1998 AND 2003, CONTROLLING FOR STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Two statistical models were used to analyze the three indicators, ITBS reading performance in 2003, old for grade in 2003, and dropping out of school between 1998 and 2003, of student academic performance. The first model was either a linear regression or logistic regression that calculated the relationship between students' DCFS experiences and the outcome controlling for the students' age. Because the analyses are cross-sectional, it is important to control for students' age because students' performance may be related to age. For instance, older students are more likely to be old for their grade then students who are young because older students have had to overcome the promotional requirements in third and sixth grade and had more opportunity to be retained in the same grade. This analysis provides an estimate of the relationship between DCFS contact and the indicator of student academic performance.

The second statistical model was a two-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) where student information was entered at level one and school information was entered at level two. Earlier we noted that students in care attended schools that were lower performing than other CPS schools. The two-level HLM assists in determining the extent to which differences in achievement between students in care and other CPS students may reflect the quality of the school they attended. This is accomplished by entering dummy codes indicating whether students are in care, abused or neglected and not placed, or in a permanent placement at the student level of the HLM centered on their school mean. This coding scheme compares the performance of students in care, abused or neglected and not placed, or permanent placement with the performance of other CPS students attending the same school. Also, in CPS, students with different racial or ethnic background on average perform differently (Rosenkranz, 2002). In order to statistically control for these differences, controls for student demographic characteristics, such as the poverty level of the neighborhood in which students lived and indicators of race/ethnicity, were entered at the student level. Below a more detailed description of the demographic variables entered into the model is provided as well as a description of the samples included in the analysis. This is followed by the analysis results.

Description of Variables Included in the Models

The variables consistently used as demographic controls in the multivariate and HLM analyses of achievement are described below. Most special education diagnosis such as mentally handicapped were included as controls because they represented physical disabilities that are assumed to not be caused by the students' previous experiences of abuse or neglect and their experiences in out of care. Two diagnoses, however, learning disabled and emotional behavior disorder were not included. The learning disabled (LD) diagnosis was excluded because many students are referred for evaluation and subsequently classified as LD because of low academic achievement and being old for their grade. Presently, it is difficult to distinguish students who were placed in this category because they are very low achieving and struggling with reading from students with disabilities. Thus, including the learning disabled diagnosis as a control may lead to overestimating the achievement of students in care. Since a substantial number of students in care are classified as learning disabled, including learning disability as a control

variable in the analyses may also obscure the real academic needs of a substantial number of students in care. Emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) was not included as a control variable because disruptive school behaviors that lead to classifying students as EBD are theorized to at least partially be related to students' experiences of abuse or neglect, their separation from their family, or problems in out-of-home care. Consequently, including EBD as a control variable may hide an important challenge confronting a portion of students in care.

Table D1. Demographic Controls used in the Analyses of School Achievement

Variable	Description
Demographic Characteristics	
Male	One on the variable indicates the student is male and zero indicates the student is female.
Percent of Families Living in Poverty in Students' Neighborhoods	The census block group in which the student lived during the school year was matched with 2000 census information on the percent of families living in poverty. This provides an estimate of the poverty level of the neighborhood in which the student lives.
Percent of Adults with Less than a High School Education in Students' Neighborhoods	The census block group in which the student lived during the school year was matched with 2000 census information on the percent of people 25 years old or older that have less than a high school education. This provides a second estimate of the poverty level of the neighborhood in which the student lives.
Miss Family Poverty	We were unable to map the home addresses of a small percent of students, around 1 to 2 percent, due to errors in the home addresses or Chicago street maps. Also, census block groups with less than 50 families were excluded because the small sample size precluded the calculation of a meaningful percentage.
Miss Students' Neighborhood	We were unable to map the home addresses of a small percent of students, around 1 to 2 percent, due to errors in the home addresses or Chicago street maps. Also, census block groups with less than 100 people aged 25 and over were excluded because the small sample size precluded the calculation of a meaningful percentage.
African-American	This was the reference category for the set of race/ethnicity variables; a zero indicated that the student was African-American and not Latino/a
Latino/a	A one indicated that the student was Latino/a
White	A one indicated that the student was white and not Latino/a
Asian or Pacific Islander	A one indicated that the student was Asian or from the Pacific Islands
Native American	A one indicated that the student was Native American
Age	A series of dummies were entered to control for the age of the student derived by subtracting September first of the school year minus their birth date
Special Education	
Mental Impairment	A one indicates that the student was diagnosed as exhibiting significantly below average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period.
Other Disability	A one indicates all other diagnoses besides learning disabled, emotional behavior disorder, and mentally impairment, such as visual impairment, autism, and speech and language impairment are included in this category.
Achievement (Only Used in the Dropout Analysis)	
Eighth Grade Reading Achievement	Last eighth grade test score on the reading ITBS achieved by the student. The Rasch reading score was used.
Old for grade	Whether the student was old for grade at age 14

Samples

Different samples of students were used in the analyses of the three achievement indicators in order to adjust to the availability of data and nature of each indicator. The samples used in each analysis are briefly described. For the 2003 analyses of students reading scores, four selection criteria were used age, bilingual status, school type, and school enrollment. Students eight through thirteen years old were included because these ages approximate the school grades, third through eighth grade, for which schools are held accountable and most students are tested. Second, consistent with CPS guidelines bilingual students who had less than four years in bilingual education had their test scores excluded because the process of learning English may deflate their reading test scores. Third, only the students attending general education schools were included because most students attend general education schools, students attending alternative and special education schools have specialized needs, and comparing students in alternative and special education schools against other students in those same schools may be invalid due to the unique and diverse needs of children attending those schools. Finally, students attending schools with less than 20 eight through thirteen year olds were excluded because the school was deemed invalid and probably the result of administrative error. The analysis of old for grade used the same selection criteria except students age six through thirteen were included because this encompassed approximately first through eighth grade. Bilingual students were alsoincluded.

The dropout sample differed from the other analyses because it focused on one cohort of students, 14 year olds in 1998. For this analysis, students were associated with the high school they attended when they first entered ninth grade. Consequently, students who dropped out of school before entering ninth grade were excluded from the analysis and estimates of the overall dropout rates in the Chicago Public Schools are slightly underestimated. Similar to the other analyses, only students attending general high schools and high schools serving more than 20 students were included in the analysis. Again, this positively biases the dropout analyses because it excludes low-achieving students who were two or more years behind at age 15 and had to enter high school through an academic preparatory academy, now call achievement academies, which in this analyses is counted as an alternative school.

Table D2. Results from the Statistical Analyses of the Achievement Outcomes

Variable	2003 Reading Achievement Ages 8 to 13: Regression Control ling for Child's Age	2003 Reading Achievement Ages 8 to 13: Two-Level HLM with All Demographic Controls	2003 Old for Grade Ages 6 to 13: Logistic Regression Control ling for Child's Age	2003 Old for Grade Ages 6 to 13: Two-Level HLM with All Demographic Controls	Dropout Rates of 14 Year Olds between 1998 and 2003: Logistic Regression No Controls	Dropout Rates of 14 Year Olds between 1998 and 2003: Two-Level HLM with All Demographic Controls	Dropout Rates of 14 Year Olds: Two-Level HLM with Demographic and Achievement Controls
Intercept	206.0	210.8	-1.39*	-1.78*	-.64*	-.53*	-.56*
AGE CONTROLS							
Age 6	--	--	-2.22*	-2.26*	--	--	--
Age 7	--	--	-1.07*	-1.11*	--	--	--
Age 8	-24.6*	-24.1*	-.69*	-.72*	--	--	--
Age 9	-11.6*	-11.3*	.21*	.20*	--	--	--
Age 11	9.3*	9.1*	-.00	.03	--	--	--
Age 12	22.1*	21.0*	.45*	.57*	--	--	--
Age 13	35.0*	34.0*	.27*	.43*	--	--	--
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS							
Male		-5.5*		.38*		.54*	.52*
Percent Families Living in Poverty in Students' Neighborhood		-1.3*		.06*		.13*	.13*
Percent Adults Less than a HS Education in Students' Neighborhood		-.93*		.05*		-.02	-.02
Miss Family Poverty		-2.6		.12		.52*	.53*
Miss Students' Neighborhood		3.8*		-.05		-.35	-.37*
White		14.2*		-.18*		-.07	-.03
Latino/a		4.8*		-.25*		-.20*	-.21*
Asian or Pacific Islander		18.0*		-.68*		-1.02*	-1.05*
Native American		7.4*		-.02		.36	.44
SPECIAL EDUCATION							
Mental Disability		-47.1*		.80*		-.44*	-.90*
Other Disability		9.7*		.54*		-.54*	-.70*
ACHIEVEMENT MEASURES							
Old for Grade							.43*
8th Grade Reading							-.21*
DCFS MEASURES							
In Out-of-Home Care	**-15.7***	**-7.5***	**.89***	**.56***	**1.05***	**.65***	**.60***
Permanent Placement	**-14.8***	**-5.6***	**.64***	**.28***	**.95***	**.66***	**.63***
Abused/Neglected and Not Placed	**-12.4***	**-5.8***	**.73***	**.48***	**.88***	**.66***	**.64***

* p<.05   ^p<.10

APPENDIX E

LONGITUDINAL MODELS OF STUDENTS READING ACHIEVEMENT

LONGITUDINAL MODELS OF STUDENTS READING ACHIEVEMENT

The longitudinal analyses tracked the reading achievement of six cohorts of six year olds in CPS starting with students turning six in 1993 and ending with students turning six in 1997 from approximately age eight to thirteen years old. Third through eighth grade test scores were used in the analysis. First grade and second grade test scores and consequently performance at age six and seven were excluded from the analysis because students and schools were not held accountable for their test performance in first and second grade and not all students in these two grades were tested.

Three two-level HLM models were used to analyze the data. For all three models, level one, or the time level, stacked students' reading test scores between ages eight and thirteen and measured yearly reading growth by creating an age variable where age was coded by subtracting eight from each age (e.g., age eight was coded as zero and age nine as one). This coding scheme results in the intercept being the estimated achievement of a child at age eight. On level two, or the student level, information about the student that remained constant across their time in CPS such as their ethnicity was entered.

The first HLM model included measures of children's contact with DCFS entered at level two, but no demographic controls at either the time or student level. Because the interaction with DCFS of children in care varied across their time in CPS (i.e., some moved into permanent placement and other children were placed in care when they were school age), CPS students who were ever in care at any point during their time in CPS were grouped into four categories: children who spent their full time in CPS in care, children who spent some time in CPS in care and then transitioned into a permanent placement, children who started with their family and then were placed in care during their time with CPS, and finally children who started with their family, were then placed in care, and finally transitioned into a permanent placement. All of these variables were entered at the student level because we wanted general estimates of how students with experiences in DCFS perform over their career. Further more detailed HLM analyses using measures of placement and permanency are needed to understand how shifts among family care and permanent placements are related to reading growth.

Another dummy variable was entered at level two to represent students who exited care and entered a permanent placement before entering CPS and consequently spent their full academic career in CPS in a permanent placement. Finally, CPS students who were abused and neglected and not placed in care were grouped into five categories based on the age they were reported as being abused or neglected: abused and neglected both before turning five and after turning five, abused and neglected before turning nine and after turning nine, abused and neglected before turning five years old, abused and neglected between five and nine years old, and abused and neglected after nine years old.

The second HLM model entered demographic controls as well as information about students' contact with DCFS. The analyses used the same set of demographic controls used in cross-sectional analyses of the 2003 achievement outcomes described in Appendix D with some adjustments. Because many students moved during their career in CPS, the average of the poverty level and educational level of all the neighborhoods students lived in was used as a control at the student level. Also, a dummy variable at the student level was entered that

represented the percent of tests that a student took when they were in bilingual education for four or fewer years. Also, at the time level, the student received a one for every test measurement that occurred when they had been in bilingual education for four or less years. These dummy variables were created because we were concerned that the reading growth of students in bilingual education would be artificially increased as they were learning English. Similarly, a dummy variable was entered at the student level to represent the percent of years that a student spent in CPS classified with a disability other than learning disabled and emotional behavior disorder. Similar to bilingual education, a second dummy code was entered at level one to represent when the student was in special education. Students classified as mentally impaired were excluded from this analysis because their growth slopes are expected to be erratic.

The third HLM model was identical to the second except a latent variable analysis was used to enter students' estimated reading achievement at age eight as a predictor of their yearly reading growth. Age eight reading achievement was entered as a predictor because previous analysis indicated that low-achieving eight year olds tend to improve their reading scores more each year then high-achieving students and consequently close the achievement gap separating them. Because many of the students in care were behind other CPS students at age eight, it was important to determine if they were closing the reading achievement gap as fast as other CPS students with similar achievement levels at age eight. The results of all three models are provided below.

Table E1. Reading Achievement of Eight Year Olds Between 1994 and 1998

Variable	Model with No Controls	Model with Full Demographic Controls	Model with Demographic Controls and Achievement at Age 8
INTERCEPT (READING ACHIEVEMENT AT AGE EIGHT)	-1.43*	-1.45*	-1.45*
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS			
Male	--	-.23*	-.23*
Average of the Percent of Families Living in Poverty in Students' Neighborhoods	--	-.07*	-.07*
Average of the Percent of Adults with Less than a HS Education in Students' Neighborhoods	--	-.13*	-.13*
Miss Family Poverty	--	.12*	.12*
White	--	.65*	.65*
Latino/a	--	.12*	.12*
Asian or Pacific Islander	--	.70*	.70*
Native American	--	.63*	.63*
Turned 8 years old by September 1994	-.04*	-.02*	-.02*
Turned 8 years old by September 1995	.12*	.14*	.14*
Turned 8 years old by September 1996	.20*	.21*	.21*
Turned 8 years old by September 1997	.26*	.25*	.25*
Mean Years in CPS Spent in Special Education with a Diagnosis of Other than Learning Disabled, Emotion or Behavior Disorder, or Mental Impairment		-.34*	-.34*
Mean Years in CPS Where Student had Four Or Fewer Years of Bilingual Education	--	-1.33*	-1.33*
DCFS MEASURES			
Abused and Neglected before and after Turning Five Years Old	-.50*	-.42*	-.42*
Abused and Neglected before and after Turning 9 Years Old	-.54*	-.46*	-.46*
Abused and Neglected when One to Five Years Old	-.30*	-.24*	-.24*
Abused and Neglected When Five to Nine Years Old	-.32*	-.26*	-.26*
Abused and Neglected When Nine or Older	-.31*	-.25*	-.25*
Spent All of Time in CPS in Permanent Placement	-.35*	-.26*	-.26*
Spent All of Time in CPS in Care	-.48*	-.43*	-.43*
During their Enrollment in CPS, Students were Both in Care and a Permanent Placement	-.38*	-.29*	-.29*
During their Enrollment in CPS, Students were with their Family and then Placed in Care	-.50*	-.43*	-.43*
During their Enrollment in CPS, Students were with their family, then placed in care, and finally placed in a permanent placement	-.28*	-.21*	-.21*

* p<.05

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Table E1. Reading Achievement of Eight Year Olds Between 1994 and 1998 (Continued)

Variable	Model with No Controls	Model with Full Demographic Controls	Model with Demographic Controls and Achievement at Age 8
YEAR GROWTH IN READING	.469*	.475*	.433*
READING ACHIEVEMENT AT AGE 8	--	--	-.029*
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS			
Male	--	-.007*	-.013*
Average of the Percent of Families Living in Poverty in Students' Neighborhoods	--	-.005*	-.007*
Average of the Percent of Adults with Less than a HS Education in Students' Neighborhoods	--	.004*	-.000
Miss Average Neighborhood Context	--	-.006	-.003
White	--	-.004^	.015*
Latino/a	--	.032*	.036*
Asian or Pacific Islander	--	.040*	.060*
Native American	--	-.012	.006
Turned 8 years old by September 1994	.009*	.008*	.007*
Turned 8 years old by September 1995	-.041*	-.041*	-.037*
Turned 8 years old by September 1996	-.078*	-.075*	-.069*
Turned 8 years old by September 1997	-.135*	-.130*	-.123*
Mean Years in CPS Spent in Special Education with a Diagnosis of Other than Learning Disabled, Emotion or Behavior Disorder, or Mental Impairment	--	-.016	-.026*
Mean Years in CPS Where Student had Four Or Fewer Years of Bilingual Education	--	.164*	.126*
DCFS MEASURES			
Abused and Neglected before and after Turing Five Years Old	-.035*	-.020*	-.032*
Abused and Neglected before and after Turning 9 Years Old	-.028*	-.017	-.030*
Abused and Neglected when One to Five Years Old	-.022*	-.009*	-.015*
Abused and Neglected When Five to Nine Years Old	-.015*	-.005	-.013*
Abused and Neglected When Nine or Older	-.016*	-.011*	-.018*
Spent All of Time in CPS in Permanent Placement	-.035*	-.022*	-.030*
Spent All of Time in CPS in Care	-.036*	-.019*	-.032*
During their Enrollment in CPS, Students were Both in Care and a Permanent Placement	-.018*	-.000	-.008*
During their Enrollment in CPS, Students were with their Family and then Placed in Care	-.031*	-.014^	-.026*
During their Enrollment in CPS, Students were with their family, then placed in care, and finally placed in a permanent placement	-.027*	-.012^	-.018*
Was Classified with Other Special Education Diagnosis	--	-.000	-.000
Was in Bilingual Education for Less than Four Years	--	.009*	.009*

* p<.05   ^*p*<.10

APPENDIX F

YEARLY DROPOUT RATES OF RECENT COHORTS OF 13- AND 14-YEAR-OLDS

YEARLY DROPOUT RATES OF RECENT COHORTS OF 13- AND 14-YEAR-OLDS

The tables below track the dropout rates of five cohorts of 13-14 year olds and 14-15 year olds over a five-year period. Specifically, the dropout rates of 13-14 and 14-15 year olds in 1998 through 2002 are tracked from 1999 to 2003.

Table F1. Dropout Rates* for 13-14 Year Olds Over a Five Year Period

Type of Placement(s) While in Foster Care	In Out-of-Home Care (%)	Permanent Placement (%)	Abused or Neglected and Not Placed (%)	Other CPS (%)
Dropout Rates One Year Later (Ages 14-15)				
13 Years Old in Sept. 1998	7	5	5	4
13 Years Old in Sept. 1999	7	3	6	4
13 Years Old in Sept. 2000	9	4	5	3
13 Years Old in Sept. 2001	7	3	3	3
13 Years Old in Sept. 2002	8	4	4	3
Dropout Rates Two Years Later (Ages 15-16)				
13 Years Old in Sept. 1998	15	10	11	7
13 Years Old in Sept. 1999	14	9	11	6
13 Years Old in Sept. 2000	14	7	9	5
13 Years Old in Sept. 2001	14	6	8	6
Dropout Rates Three Years Later (Ages 16-17)				
13 Years Old in Sept. 1998	29	24	23	16
13 Years Old in Sept. 1999	24	20	23	13
13 Years Old in Sept. 2000	25	18	21	12
Dropout Rates Four Years Later (Ages 17-18)				
13 Years Old in Sept. 1998	42	36	38	24
13 Years Old in Sept. 1999	39	33	38	22
Dropout Rates Five Years Later (Ages 18-19)				
13 Years Old in Sept. 1998	57	48	49	34

* In this analysis, students who left school because they were incarcerated were counted as dropout because they had failed to complete their high school diploma.

Table F2. Dropout Rates* for 14-15 Year Olds Over a Five Year Period

Type of Placement(s) While in Foster Care	In Out-of-Home Care (%)	Permanent Placement (%)	Abused or Neglected and Not Placed (%)	Other CPS (%)
Dropout Rates One Year Later (Ages 15-16)				
14 Years Old in Sept. 1998	12	8	10	5
14 Years Old in Sept. 1999	13	7	8	4
14 Years Old in Sept. 2000	10	7	8	4
14 Years Old in Sept. 2001	11	5	6	3
14 Years Old in Sept. 2002	12	4	7	4
Dropout Rates Two Years Later (Ages 16-17)				
14 Years Old in Sept. 1998	24	24	25	14
14 Years Old in Sept. 1999	27	22	21	13
14 Years Old in Sept. 2000	24	18	20	11
14 Years Old in Sept. 2001	23	16	19	10
Dropout Rates Three Years Later (Ages 17-18)				
14 Years Old in Sept. 1998	40	40	43	24
14 Years Old in Sept. 1999	43	35	36	21
14 Years Old in Sept. 2000	39	31	35	20
Dropout Rates Four Years Later (Ages 18-19)				
14 Years Old in Sept. 1998	55	52	54	33
14 Years Old in Sept. 1999	58	47	47	31
Dropout Rates Five Years Later (Ages 19-20)				
14 Years Old in Sept. 1998	63	61	61	38

*In this analysis, students who left school because they were incarcerated were counted as dropout because they had failed to complete their high school diploma.

APPENDIX G

ANALYSIS OF 2003 SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENTS

ANALYSIS OF 2003 SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENTS

This analysis predicted the likelihood that students were placed in special education as of 2003. Similar to the analyses presented in Appendix D, two statistical models were used to predict special education classification. The first model was a logistic regression that controlled for students' age and the second model was a two-level hierarchical linear model that controlled for students' demographic characteristics and compared students against other students attending the same school. A more detailed description of the analytic approach and variables can be found in Appendix D.

Table G1. Performance Outcomes Controlling for Demographic Characteristics and School Enrolled

Variable	Logistic Regression Controlling for Child's Age	Two-Level HLM with All Demographic Controls
Intercept	-1.99*	-2.14*
AGE CONTROLS		
Age 6	-.77*	-.77*
Age 7	-.56*	-.57*
Age 8	-.35*	-.35*
Age 9	-.15*	-.15*
Age 11	.08*	.09*
Age 12	.20*	.24*
Age 13	.33*	.37*
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS		
Male		.76*
Percent Families Living in Poverty in Students' Neighborhood		.03*
Percent Adults Less than a HS Education in Students' Neighborhood		.01
Miss Family Poverty		.00
Miss Students' Neighborhood		.08
White		-.11
Latino/a		-.36*
Asian or Pacific Islander		-1.13*
Native American		.07
DCFS MEASURES		
In Out-of-Home Care	**1.29***	**1.24***
Permanent Placement	**.73***	**.70***
Abused/Neglected and Not Placed	**.47***	**.45***

* p<.05   ^p<.10