

Turning Dreams into Degrees
Intervention Evaluation
Executive Summary & Report

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John Burton Advocates for Youth is a nonprofit organization focused on empowering youth in foster care across the state to achieve their higher education goals and move on to fulfilling careers, by engaging institutions to work together, sharing best practices, and advocating for policies that support current and former foster youth to obtain a higher education.

In addition to other services, JBAY develops resources for professionals in a range of fields to support youth in foster care achieve college success. This has included a website for comprehensive college planning, an educational planning guide, a training curriculum for college faculty and staff regarding the needs of youth in foster care, and regular in-person and online trainings. Locally in Los Angeles, JBAY leads the Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative Foster Youth College Advancement Project, dedicated to improving the post-secondary educational outcomes of youth in foster care.

Foster and Kinship Care Education is a statewide program that provides specialized classes at local community colleges for foster parents and relative caregivers (collectively referred to as *resource parents* in this report). FKCE programs play a pivotal role in helping resource parents to meet the educational, emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs of the children and youth in out-of-home care.

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Hope Education Research Solutions is an independent educational consulting firm that specializes in efficacy research, design and implementation, program development and evaluation, and professional development/staff training. With a deep understanding of the importance and value of quality learning experiences for children and adults, our team thoughtfully collaborates to create custom solutions that answer research questions and advance knowledge.

Dr. Leslie Ponciano, the founder of Hope Education Research Solutions, has 25+ years of experience in the design and implementation of evaluation research as well as in the creation and delivery of professional development curriculum for educators and social service professionals. Her professional life also includes experience as a social worker supervisor, university professor, academic program director, and research director. She has published and presented her research that examines environmental influences such as foster care, educational technology, and caregiver/teacher practices on the outcomes of children. Dr. Ponciano's personal background includes experience as a foster parent, an advocate for youth in foster care, and a decades-long volunteer for a community-based non-profit organization that serves youth in foster care

Evaluation of *Turning Dreams into Degrees* Curriculum Executive Summary

John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY), in partnership with Unite-LA, and with input from Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), developed a curriculum for foster parents and relative caregivers (collectively referred to as *resource parents* in this report) to increase the probability of youth in foster care attending college. In March of 2019, DCFS required that resource parents with court dependent youth in their care between the ages of 12-19 complete the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* curriculum. JBAY partnered with FKCE to deliver the curriculum in English and Spanish at local community colleges throughout Los Angeles County. *Education Course 1* is a 3-hour class for resource parents with students in grades 6 – 10 and *Education Course 2* is a 3-hour class for resource parents with students in grades 11-12 or recent high school graduates.

Between August 2019 and February 2020, an independent evaluation was conducted during which 162 resource parents from 14 FKCE classes completed surveys before and after the class. Additionally, 49% (N=79) of the participating resource parents responded to follow-up questions three months after taking the class. Nine FKCE teachers of the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* curriculum completed surveys after teaching Education Course 1 or 2 and 10 FKCE teachers participated in a focus group in June 2020.

Findings:

1. The curriculum received high praise from all stakeholders.
 - 100% of resource parents and FKCE teachers who completed surveys would recommend the courses, both at the time of completion and three months later
 - 100% of resource parents reported that the teacher was knowledgeable and shared important information
 - 100% of teachers reported that they were comfortable with the content
 - 100% of the FKCE teachers in the focus group reported that the curriculum empowered and informed resource parents
 - 8.9 out of 10: FKCE teachers rated resource parent engagement and interactivity
2. The surveys revealed positive changes in resource parents' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge.
 - 96% increase in the resource parents' belief that college can be a path for all students
 - 29% increase in resource parents' attitude about youth interest in college
 - 24% increase in resource parents' belief in their knowledge to answer questions about college planning
 - 158% increase in believing both caregivers and social workers are responsible for college planning
 - 78% of FKCE teachers thought the class would increase resource parent knowledge of and comfort with college planning
3. Three months after the course(s), resource parents reported some changes in behavior related to college planning.
 - 24% were talking to youth about college and 32% were talking with the social worker about college planning for the youth in their care
 - 38% were talking to youth about educational goals and 16% had helped their youth set educational goals
 - 67% of FKCE teachers thought the class would positively change resource parent activity in college planning

Recommendations:

1. Continue to provide the training for resource parents with youth in their care ages 12-19 and offer the curriculum to resource parents of children in elementary school.
2. Combine existing content on resource parents' communication with social workers, students, and school personnel to create a team/collaborative approach that facilitates roles and responsibilities in college planning.
 - Share individual student educational information with all members of the caregiving team.
 - Develop additional strategies to strengthen communication across the caregiving team.
3. Expand the content on the advantages and disadvantages of various post-secondary pathways (i.e., dual enrollment, housing availability, etc.).
4. Suggestions for a conversion to online delivery:
 - Avoid replication of an in-person class in front of a camera. Take advantage of the interactive features that are available in various online platforms (breakout rooms, polling, chat boxes, discussion boards, etc.).
 - Create an interactive environment with a mix of large group, small group, paired, and individual activities.
 - Provide opportunities for participants to share their experiences and ask questions.
 - Set classroom expectations (cameras on, microphones muted, etc.).
 - Provide additional staffing to address technical difficulties and/or to monitor attendance and attention.

Conclusion

This evaluation found strong evidence that the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* curriculum has the potential to increase the awareness of resource parents to engage in activities and discussions to support the pursuit and achievement of a college degree by youth in foster care. The three-month follow-up with participating resource parents also yielded positive findings about their retention and application of the content from the courses. The focus group with FKCE teachers provided context for understanding the survey results. One outstanding value that must be noted is how the partnership between JBAY and FKCE, and the policy support from DCFS, exemplifies the unified effort that is needed to enact positive change.

One limitation was that the sample sizes of both evaluation participant groups were smaller than expected due to the outbreak of COVID-19; in-person FKCE classes were halted in March 2020, the closing of all schools limited college planning activities, and shelter-in-place orders impacted learning and educational goals. While FKCE classes were rapidly converted to online delivery at the beginning the pandemic, the Human Subjects approvals for the original evaluation design could not quickly or easily be modified for a different delivery modality; thereby, limiting data collection to in-person classes scheduled prior to the stay-at-home health orders.

An unexpected finding was that the majority of the resource parents who participated in the evaluation activities reported having a college degree and that they were well-informed about college planning *prior* to taking the class. The FKCE teachers in the focus group were surprised by this finding and reported that the class participants were less educated and informed than they claimed. Although, the higher than expected self-report ratings of prior knowledge limited the potential for measurable change in knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors resulting from class attendance, notable increases were still recorded in all categories.

Turning Dreams into Degrees Evaluation Report

Introduction

It is difficult for all parents to navigate the complex and often-changing processes associated with college planning. However, foster parents and relative caregivers (referred to collectively in this report as *resource parents*) of youth in foster care must also navigate a unique combination of challenges that range from a lack of enforcement of educational rights and missing school records to school mobility, placement disruptions, missing academic credit, special needs, and poor academic performance.¹⁻³ In addition, youth in foster care are coping with the aftermath of ongoing emotional, and sometimes physical, trauma that can interfere with their ability to focus and process the lessons in class.

There is little evidence that resource parents receive training specifically focused on meeting the educational needs of the youth in their care⁴ and yet, youth in foster care are dependent on resource parents to provide them with the necessary information and access to activities related to educational preparation and post-secondary education planning. Often lacking personal experience or formal training with higher education, resource parents are not always aware of the resources that exist to help youth in foster care prepare, plan and enroll in college. Furthermore, many colleges and universities provide extensive financial aid and foster care specific programming that can include priority registration, access to year-round

housing, tutoring, educational planning, book vouchers, etc. A specialized course to address the role of resource parents in meeting the complex educational needs of youth in foster care is needed.

Research has demonstrated the benefit of education-related services on positive educational outcomes for youth in foster care.⁵ Although there is a gap in the literature examining the contribution of resource parents to those educational outcomes, there is strong evidence that parental involvement (not specific to foster care) is positively correlated with improved educational attainment and engagement.⁶⁻⁸

The results of several studies point to the importance of communication between child welfare agencies, schools, and caregivers to convey the value of education.^{9,10} Furthermore, parents (not specific to foster care) who believe their children can achieve in school and who hold high expectations for school performance tend to have students who are successful.⁶ Therefore, John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) developed a comprehensive training program for resource parents in partnership with Unite LA, the Los Angeles County Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) and Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) to improve the likelihood that youth in foster care will receive educational support in their home environment leading to a degree and future career success. This report provides the results of an independent evaluation of the training curriculum.

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Intervention

The Foster Youth College Advancement Project is an initiative within the Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative and seeks to increase foster youth post-secondary attainment in Los Angeles County to help youth transition to sustainable careers and achieve self-sufficiency. The project is convened by JBAY and brings together key stakeholders and partners from K-12 education, higher education, child welfare, local government, and the nonprofit sector to advance this goal. The project partners recognize the important role that resource parents play in supporting foster youth in their college journeys and designed training materials to empower resource parents with comprehensive information about the college planning and matriculation processes.

Recognizing that foster youth can increase their likelihood of achieving meaningful career and economic independence through higher education, in March of 2019, DCFS required that any resource parent with at least one court dependent youth in their care between the ages of 12-19 complete the age-applicable portion of the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* program. Resource parents can satisfy three of the required eight hours of annual training by completing one course in this training program. Education Course 1 is designed for resource parents with youth in grades 6-10 and Education Course 2 is designed for resource parents with youth in grades 11-12 as well as recent high school graduates. Each of these courses is approximately three hours in length. Resource parents are required to complete these hours between the completion of the first annual update and completion of the second annual update. The Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) program received training on this curriculum, and in partnership with DCFS, offered these courses in English and Spanish through in-person instruction at 9 locations in LA County. The parameters of the curricula are as follows:

Curriculum in both Education Course 1 and 2:

- Why college matters
- Unique barriers that foster youth face in higher education
- How caregivers can make a difference
- Understanding the different college pathways
- Tools for exploring college and career paths
- Resource and supports for foster youth – college is possible!
- Where to get support
- Practice case scenarios

Curriculum specific to Education Course 1:

- Educational planning milestones: 6th – 10th grade

Curriculum specific to Education Course 2:

- Educational planning milestones: 11th – 12th grade

Evaluation Objectives

The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the response of resource parents to the content and delivery of the training curriculum in order to assess the impact of the intervention. An independent evaluation team collected, stored, and analyzed the data to maintain confidentiality with ethical research protocols. The evaluation did not include direct contact with the youth in foster care, because it was unlikely that the impact of the training curriculum would be measurable through youth outcomes within only a few months after the completion of the course.

The evaluation was charged with answering four research questions:

1. Does the on-site resource parent training lead to a positive change in caregivers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors with youth in their care?
2. Are there elements of the training that can be changed to make it more effective?
3. Is there a difference in effectiveness based on the teacher?
4. What are the recommendations for effectively converting the on-site training to an online delivery?

Evaluation Methodology

(1) Resource Parents: Resource parents were invited to complete a pre and post anonymous, in-person survey. The pre-intervention survey had two sections: Education/Experience questions and Beliefs/Attitudes questions. The post-intervention survey had the same Beliefs/Attitudes questions and Course Evaluation questions. Both surveys were intentionally short, so as not to impede instructional time, and they were provided in Spanish and English, utilizing language appropriate for a fifth-grade level of education. To protect identity, a unique research ID was assigned to each participating resource parent in order to match and compare responses from the pre-survey to the post-survey. The ID included the location, date, and identified either Education Course 1 or 2. Education/Experience questions included the highest level of school completion by the resource parent, years of experience as a resource parent, and number of court-dependent youth for whom the resource parent has provided care. In both the pre-survey and the post-survey, Beliefs/Attitudes questions included comfort and knowledge to help youth plan for college, communication with youth and social workers about college planning, as well as beliefs and attitudes about the importance of college, youth interest in college, youth potential for college, and the responsibility of resource parents and social workers to engage in college planning for youth. Additionally, both the pre-survey and the post-survey asked resource parents to assess their ability to answer questions about college planning and the grade range to begin talking with youth about college planning. The post-survey also included Course Evaluation questions that included recall of the three best ideas learned, an assessment of teacher knowledge and course content, identification of needed changes in the course, identification of who has good information about college planning, and if they would recommend the course.

(2) Course Instructors: FKCE teachers were also asked to complete a survey at the conclusion of the course. Their Education/Experience questions included their highest level of school completion and their experience level in facilitating trainings. The next four questions asked their assessment of how likely the course would impact resource parent activity related to college planning, increase resource parent knowledge and comfort with college planning, if they would recommend the course to resource parents, and the extent to which the resources parents were engaged with the content and participating in the course activities. Finally, the FKCE teachers were asked to respond to Belief/Attitudes questions and Course Evaluation questions as described above for the resource parent surveys.

(3) Three-month Follow-up: When providing consent to participate, resource parents were asked to share a preferred method for follow-up communication – email, phone call, or text. Approximately three months after attendance at either Education Course 1 or 2, the participating resource parents were asked to recall: three ideas they remembered from course; if they had used any of the ideas from the course; if they would recommend the course; and if they were communicating with the youth and/or social worker about college planning. Depending on their willingness, additional questions were asked to understand the context of their responses to the previous questions.

(4) FKCE Teacher Focus Group/Interview: The Director of FKCE invited all FKCE teachers of Education Courses 1 and/or 2 to attend an online focus group facilitated by Hope Education Research Solutions. Nine teachers participated in the focus group and the Director was interviewed separately in order to remove any concerns about confidentiality. The discussion prompts of the focus group and interview were intended to provide more context about the courses, the participating resource parents, and the teacher perspective.

Evaluation Sample

The two survey samples included complete responses from 162 resource parents and 14 FKCE teachers. Ten FKCE teachers participated in the online, one-hour focus group/interview. The follow-up data collection began when three months had passed from the date of course completion. After many rounds of attempts, 49% (79) of the resource parents responded, at least in part, to the follow-up text, emails, or phone calls.

Due to the unique research ID assigned to each participating resource parent for the pre-survey and post-survey (administered at the conclusion of the course), their responses were matched to compare change over time. All survey participants completed a consent form with their contact information for the three-month follow-up, but we are not able to link individual survey responses with the follow-up responses. It is possible for someone in the follow-up subgroup to have decided against completing one or both surveys, but it is not expected that this would modify the sample size. FKCE teachers completed one survey at the end of the course, but their survey responses were not matched to their focus group/interview responses. FKCE teachers who participated in the focus group or interview may comprise a different group than those who completed the survey at the conclusion of a course since all FKCE teachers who had taught Education Courses 1 and/or 2 were invited to participate but not all were directly evaluated by the research team. Therefore, the final sample size of FKCE teachers ranges from 14 – 24.

Skewed Sample: It is important to note that the resource parents who completed pre and post-training surveys reported that they were well-informed about college **prior** to taking the class; limiting the opportunity for changes in behavior to be measured.

- 74% reported they knew the steps to apply to college
- 89% reported that they talked to their youth about college
- 76% reported that they answered questions about college planning
- 87% reported being comfortable with helping youth plan for college.

Furthermore, 54% of the resource parents who completed the surveys reported that they had completed a college degree and 13% reported completion of a graduate degree (for a total of 67%). In the focus group, FKCE teachers were surprised by the self-reported educational levels of the resource parents. They perceived the resource parents who attended their classes to be less informed than the survey results indicated. They also believed that the number of resource parents who self-reported completion of a college or graduate degree was too high. Therefore, the resource parents who participated in the evaluation may either be well-informed and educated or did not respond to these questions with accuracy.

Limitations

The evaluation of the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* curriculum was designed after delivery began of the intervention. In accordance with ethical research standards, participation in the evaluation was voluntary and, typically, 90 – 100% of the resource parents who had the opportunity to participate in the evaluation agreed to do so. However, courses were abruptly paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting data collection. Although FKCE eventually converted to online delivery of the content, the potential differences between the two groups of participants associated with the constraints of a pandemic and inequitable internet access contributed to the decision to end data collection early.

Results

Finding #1

The curriculum received high praise from all stakeholders.

Feedback obtained through the surveys, follow-up, and/or focus group/interview was strongly and unanimously positive from both resource parents and FKCE teachers.

- 100% of resource parents and FKCE teachers who completed surveys would recommend the courses, both at the time of completion and three months later
- 100% of resource parents reported that the teacher was knowledgeable and shared important information
- 100% of the FKCE teachers reported that they were comfortable with the content
- 100% of the FKCE teachers in the focus group reported that the curriculum empowered and informed resource parents

A question on the survey asked resource parents and FKCE teachers what they would change about the course(s). The results from the resource parents found that 90% preferred no changes be made, 3% suggested changes in delivery mode (webinar, podcast, etc.), 6% suggested changes in scheduling (time of day, length of course, etc.), and 1% suggested changes in teaching methods (more knowledge, more energy, better time management, etc.). FKCE teachers were more critical in their responses on the survey but remained solidly enthusiastic and supportive of the existing course(s) during the focus group/interview. In the survey, 44% of FKCE teachers preferred no changes be made in the courses, 44% suggested changes in the content (more specific, more general, different content, more resources, etc.), and 12% suggested changes in format (level of interactivity).

In the focus group/interview, the facilitator had to probe several times before the participants were willing to be specific about these changes. They suggested the following changes in content: 1) including information about dual enrollment (high school and college), 2) including resource parents of children younger than 6th grade, 3) providing a form for the educational goals of each youth that is stored in the home, in the school file, and in the case file, 4) warning resource parents about the lack of housing for students who choose community college or trade school, and 5) a heavier emphasis on the importance of building strong caregiver-child relationships. The format change discussion focused on how in every group of attendees, there are several who do not actively participate in course activities. The consensus was that this is typical for all learning environments and not a reflection of the intervention. In fact, on the survey, FKCE teachers were asked to rate the engagement and interactivity level of the resource parents in their classes on a ten-point scale. The average score was 8.9 with 67% selecting a 9 or a 10.

Recommendations:

- **Continue to provide the training for resource parents with youth in their care ages 12-19 and offer the course to resource parents of children younger than sixth grade.**
- **Provide information on the advantages and disadvantages of various post-secondary pathways, including dual enrollment credit and the lack of housing for students in community colleges or trade schools.**
- **Share individual student educational information with all members of the caregiving team (resource parent, social worker, school staff) to support better collaboration and a cohesive approach to college educational planning.**

Finding #2

The surveys revealed positive changes in resource parents' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge.

Resource parents reported higher than expected ratings of prior knowledge on the pre-survey (see *Skewed Sample* description above) before attending the course. This created a ceiling effect that limits the potential for growth from pre to post. However, despite this limitation, the post-survey revealed that the course(s) had a positive impact on participants' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about college planning for youth in foster care. With a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), resource parents were asked to rate their belief that there is a path to college for all students. On the pre-survey, 28% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement but on the post-survey, 55% agreed or strongly agreed, representing a 96% increase. A question on the survey that assessed attitude about college planning for youth in foster care was, "I think that youth (over 12 years) are interested in college." On the same Likert scale, 65% agreed or strongly agreed on the pre-survey and 84% agreed or strongly agreed on the post-survey (29% increase). Lastly, an example of a question that assessed knowledge was, "How well do you think you can answer questions from youth about college planning?" Resource parents were asked to score themselves on a ten-point scale. The average response of 7.4 on the pre-test increased to 8.7 on the post-test. Furthermore, there was a 24% increase in the number of resource parents who rated themselves at a 7 or above on their knowledge to answer questions about college planning (pre: 76% to post: 94%). A few additional survey questions are found in the table below.

Resource Parent Survey: Beliefs and Attitudes	Pre-test	Post-test
<i>I am comfortable helping youth plan for college.</i>	87%	100%
<i>I think college planning can make a difference in student success.</i>	94%	100%
<i>I think it is important for youth in foster care to attend college.</i>	89%	97%

FKCE teachers were asked in their survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the course to change the comfort level and knowledge of resource parents. A ten-point scale was provided for the teachers to rate the likelihood that the course(s) "will increase caregiver knowledge and comfort in providing support and guidance in college planning." The average score was 9.3; 67% of the teachers who completed the survey rated this question with a 10. FKCE teachers also answered some of the same questions (as the resource parents) regarding their own attitudes and beliefs:

FKCE Teacher Survey: Beliefs and Attitudes	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing/ Don't know
<i>I think that youth (over 12 years) in foster care are interested in college.</i>	11%	44%	11%	0	33%
<i>I think college planning can make a difference in student success.</i>	0	89%	0	0	11%
<i>I think it is important for youth in foster care to attend college.</i>	11%	89%	0	0	0
<i>It is realistic to expect youth in foster care to pursue some type of post-secondary education</i>	11%	56%	0	11%	22%

Both resource parents and FKCE teachers were asked to select sources of good information for college planning. After the course, the top 3 selections of the resource parents were Caregiver (72%), School Counselor (64%), and a tie for Social Worker (49%) and Independent Living Program Transition Coordinator (49%). The top 3 selections for the FKCE teachers included a 3-way tie for School Counselor (100%), Social Worker (100%), and Independent Living Program Transition Coordinator (100%), followed by Caregiver (89%), and a tie between Psychologist (67%) and Coach (67%).

Both surveys also included an opportunity for resource parents and FKCE teachers to indicate when they thought conversations about college planning should begin with youth. Before the course, 79% of the resource parents selected middle school and high school, the age range covered by the courses. After the course, the distribution of their responses changed with only 54% selecting those same categories, and a 30% increase in the selection of preschool (see table below). The post-survey responses by the resource parents are well-aligned with the responses by the FKCE teachers to the same question. Therefore, it is likely that attendance in the course(s) shifted the understanding that college planning discussions need to begin early. In fact, the FKCE teachers suggested that the courses expand the target audience to resource parents with children younger than sixth grade.

<i>What age do you think is best for talking to youth in foster care about college planning? (Check all that apply)</i>	Resource Parents		FKCE Teachers
	Pre	Post	
Preschool	23%	30%	44%
Elementary School	49%	49%	44%
Middle School	50%	36%	33%
High School	29%	16%	11%

Lastly, both surveys asked resource parents and FKCE teachers to rate the level of responsibility that social workers and caregivers have for college planning. The questions were asked separately with a 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The table below reflects the percent of Agree and Strongly Agree responses:

<i>College planning is the responsibility of:</i>	Resource Parents		FKCE Teachers
	Pre (Agree and Strongly Agree)	Post (Agree and Strongly Agree)	(Agree and Strongly Agree)
Social Worker	32%	46%	67%
Caregiver	76%	84%	89%

Attending the course(s) appears to have increased resource parents' sense of responsibility as well as their understanding of the role of the social worker. A co-occurrence analysis found that 12% of the resource parents selected positive ratings (agree or strongly agree) for both social worker responsibility and caregiver responsibility questions in the pre-survey. In the post-survey, the co-occurrence analysis for positive ratings was 31% for these same questions, a 158% increase. The co-occurrence rate for positive ratings by the FKCE teachers was 44%. Overall, all of these shifts from pre to post bring resource parent ratings to be more in alignment with the FKCE teachers.

During the focus group, the FKCE teachers responded unanimously that both resource parents and social workers are responsible for college planning with youth in foster care. However, the discussion quickly diverted to the importance of strong, positive relationships for youth with their resource parent(s) and with their social worker(s). They believe there is a connection between the strength of the relationship and the investment of all involved to provide the support and guidance youth need to plan for, and transition to, college. They shared examples such as youth who move into college dorms alone compared to those who move their belongings with help and youth who attend college planning meetings in high school alone or with an invested adult.

Recommendations:

- **Develop additional strategies beyond the resource parent training to strengthen communication across the team of caregiving adults (resource parent, social worker, school staff) to support college preparation and planning.**

Finding #3

Three months after the course(s), resource parents reported some changes in behavior related to college planning.

The first step to understanding the role of the intervention in behavior change was to determine the retention of course content. In the post-survey and three months later, resource parents were asked to recall the three best ideas that were learned. Their entries were categorized into five content areas: 1) parenting strategies such as start planning for college early, visit colleges, and advocate for educational support services in K-12; 2) financial aid/grants including FAFSA applications, Chafee grants, and scholarships; 3) college programs such as Guardian Scholars and EOP; 4) Independent Living Plans; and 5) social worker support. Overall, the recall from immediately after the class to three months later remained stable as demonstrated by the table below:

Resource Parent Recall Responses	Post-test (N=162)	3-month Follow-up (N=79)
Parenting strategies for college planning	37%	36%
Financial aid/grants	29%	35%
College programs	16%	7%
Independent Living Plans (ILP)	7%	8%
Social Worker support	11%	14%

Once retention of content was determined, resource parents were asked to share any activities they had engaged in during the prior three months that were related to college planning. The three-month period between course completion in the fall of 2019 and the follow-up in early 2020 was characterized by holiday-related school breaks (*Follow Up A*) and the three-month period after course completion in early 2020 was characterized by pandemic concerns which eventually led to school closures (*Follow Up B*). Despite these significant issues and the short, three-month window of time, there was evidence that resource parents were engaged in important college planning activities.

- 24% reported that they were talking to youth about college
- 32% were talking with the social worker about college planning for the youth in their care
- 38% were talking to youth about educational goals
- 16% had helped their youth set educational goals

When the resource parents were willing to respond to further prompts, several in *Follow Up A* referred to how the celebrity college admissions scandal in the news cycle served as a reminder to discuss college and educational goals. Other resource parents said that talking about college with youth is typical in their homes or that the class triggered their curiosity to find out if their youth had college goals. Some specific examples of activity included attending school meetings, helping with homework, monitoring GPA, seeking tutoring, searching for colleges, and completing financial aid forms. Overall, the caregivers who were not yet actively using the content from the course attributed this to a lack of time, other urgent issues related to safety and well-being, or that the content was not applicable to the age of the children in their homes. Resource parents in *Follow Up B* were also likely to talk about pandemic concerns and online learning issues.

In the FKCE teacher survey, 67% reported that they thought the course would positively change resource parent activity in college planning. In the focus group, the FKCE teachers expanded on this result to share that while the course content is effective, there are many barriers that may still prevent resource parents from fully utilizing what they learned. They talked about how the educational rights for youth in foster care often do not reside with the resource parents and this limits their reach to help youth make important decisions. They talked about the transient lives of youth in foster

care and the emotional walls that may block strong relationships from forming and limit the investment of the child, the resource parent, and the social worker in educational goal setting. They felt it was important to be hopeful as well as realistic about the extent to which any course can overcome the challenges that are inherent to the foster care system.

Recommendations:

- **Connect content to current events to serve as reminders to apply what was learned.**
- **To provide online delivery of the courses at the same level of quality and interaction during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, consider the following suggestions:**
 - **Avoid replication of an in-person class in front of a camera. Take advantage of the features that are available in various online platforms (breakout rooms, polling, chat boxes, discussion boards)**
 - **Create an interactive environment with a mix of large group, small group, paired, and individual activities**
 - **Provide opportunities for participants to share experiences and ask questions**
 - **Set classroom expectations (cameras on, microphones muted)**
 - **Provide additional staffing to address technical difficulties and/or to monitor attendance and attention**

Conclusion

The evaluation demonstrated that the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* curriculum has the potential to make a difference in the beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of resource parents. They learned and retained information from the course(s) to guide the youth in their care to plan for college. Despite the unexpected school closures and safer-at-home orders due to COVID-19, the evaluation also collected evidence of actions by resource parents related to college planning in the months following course completion. These changes are likely attributable to the *Turning Dreams into Degrees* curriculum as the shifts between pre and post brought the resource parents' understanding of college planning to be more closely aligned with the beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of the FKCE teachers.

The high ratings of prior knowledge in the pre-survey could be interpreted as a skewed sample; however, there are reasons to discount that concern: 1) the data collection occurred at random in seven different regional areas of Los Angeles, 2) self-report data can be unreliable if participants do not yet understand what they don't know, and 3) prior knowledge of college planning does not necessarily equate to engaging in college planning activities for youth in foster care. However, even if the sample was more informed about college planning than the general population of resource parents, the evaluation still found important measurable changes in knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior that, over time, may facilitate increases in college degrees and positive outcomes for youth in foster care.

One outstanding value that must be noted is how the partnership between JBAY and FKCE, and the policy support from DCFS, exemplifies the unified effort that is needed to enact positive change. According to JBAY, the role of the caregiver in supporting students' post-secondary goals emerged early as a theme during discussions with stakeholders and was quickly recognized as an essential component of any strategy to move the needle on foster youth educational outcomes. DCFS showed tremendous leadership, emerging as the first and only county in California to explicitly require such training for caregivers and to leverage its community partners to make this a reality. Partnering with JBAY allowed DCFS to bring expertise to the table to support the development of the curriculum. The willingness of FKCE to take the lead on training delivery through their existing infrastructure for training caregivers was crucial as well to the project's success. This model may serve as an example for others looking for strategies to increase college access and success for foster youth.