THE EDUCATION OF YOUTHS PLACED IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

Jenifer Murphy

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Approved by

Advisory Committee

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Chair

Accepted by

_____
Dean, Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

The typical educational profile of a youth placed in out-of-home care was developed, and the needs of these students were compared to a variety of educational settings available. The observations made at the Boys & Girls Homes School and the interviews of teachers, administrators, social workers, and youths were then used to develop a method of measuring the success of these youths and the schools they attend. Results showed that as educators apply the principles of individualization while understanding the concepts of resiliency and a solution-focused approach, students who have been placed in out-of-home care will succeed.

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INTRODUCTION

Within every classroom is a collection of beautiful minds, each of them unique and possessing its own set of life experiences. In order to close the "performance gap" and ensure quality education for all of the students in the classroom, teachers must meet the needs of all students, regardless of their life at home with natural parents or current living situation out-of-home with relatives, foster or adoptive parents, or caregivers in a children's group home.

Each year, over half a million children are removed from their homes and placed in out-of-home care such as kinship care, foster care, and group home care. As 76% of these children are school-aged, it presents an interesting challenge to classroom teachers (Gesiriech, O'Neil & Perez, 2003); behaviorally, emotionally, and academically, these students may perform on a lower level than the rest of the class. On average, these youths lose an estimated six months of emotional development with each new placement (Kellam, 2000). Therefore, a 13 year old eighth grade student with a placement history of three foster homes and a group home would be operating at an emotional age of an 11 year old – two whole years younger than his classmates.

Along with the social, emotional, and behavioral issues these students may have, an equally large obstacle to face is the fact that the two entities responsible for their well-being (Departments of Social Service / Departments of Children & Family Services and the public school system) are too often at odds with one another as to who is the responsible party; it has not yet been determined whether school social workers, social welfare workers, or educators should bear the weight of society's responsibility to these children.

Having lived and worked with the growing population of students who have been placed in out-of-home care, the author has seen firsthand the transiency and turmoil experienced in their day-to-day living. These children are too often overlooked in their classrooms at school, and unless they have an individualized plan to ensure their success, they fall through the cracks and are left behind. Educational researchers have conducted outcome studies since the mid-1980's and have determined that something needs to be done to meet the needs of these students. One such study, conducted by Neil Bernstein in 2000, showed that between two and a half to four years after these youths age out of the foster care system,

- 46 percent had not completed high school,

- 51 percent were unemployed,

- 25 percent had been homeless for at least one night, and

- 40 percent had been on public assistance or incarcerated.

These statistics seem to hold true, regardless of location or school system as the youths placed in out-of-home care or "public care" in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland seem to have similar issues:

- 70% to 80% leave school with no qualifications;

- Less than 20% go on to further education;

- Less than 1 in 100 go to university;

- 50% to 80% are unemployed between the ages of 16 and 25

(Jackson & Sachdev 2001).

When one takes into consideration the large burden placed on society by these rates of failure, it is imperative for all parties involved in the lives of these children placed in out-of-home care to work to resolve this issue and work to help them succeed in school on all levels: socially, emotionally, academically. In order for this to happen however, major changes in both attitude and approach need to occur in our schools on all levels – from classroom teacher to administrator. This study is designed to explore the factors that contribute to the success of these youths and how we can make a difference.

The following chapter is an examination of the literature written about students who have been placed in out of home care. The purpose of this section, then, is to set a stage for the study to follow. It is an introduction to the challenges faced by students, educators, and caretakers, and a historical review of policy and research conducted in an attempt to improve the education of these youths.

The next two chapters move forward the discussion of the education of youths placed in out of home care as chapter three outlines the case study conducted at the Boys & Girls Homes School, while chapter four presents the data collected during the observations, interviews, and surveys. The interviews with students, teachers, administrators and caregivers shed light on some factors that may contribute to the academic success of students in similar circumstances on which others can draw.

The final chapter is titled "Implications for Educators." In this chapter, the reader is drawn from the theory of research to the application of educational practice and policy that could help the educational system in our country make

the necessary paradigm shift to truly meet the needs of all of its learners, despite their current living situation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Writing about the education of youths in care seems to be a relatively new area of study, as there is not a wealth of information published about this topic prior to 1990. In a search for books and articles addressing this subject, database searches were conducted using the following key words and phrases: education and group homes, education and group homes and qualitative, education and out-of-home care, education of youths in care, education and foster care, education and public care, education and residential care, education and group home, and foster home care. The library consortium was also searched using the same key words and phrases.

Typical Profile of Youths in Out-of-Home Care

While it is nearly impossible to picture the "typical" face of a youth who has been placed in out-of-home care, it is quite simple to picture the life and education of such a student. The life of this student prior to being placed in out-of-home care could have involved drug or alcohol abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect by the parent(s). It could have also involved criminal behavior, truancy, or drug or alcohol abuse by the youth. Regardless of the individual case resulting in out-of-home placement, however, all of these 375,000 young people in our country are now in the public education system. Their educational attainment is "significantly below" that of other students (Jackson & Martin, 2002, p. 121), and their academic fate lies in the hand of their teachers, school administrators, and care givers. As out-of-home placement is an issue that

warrants the "invocation of extraordinary educational support," it is imperative that efforts be made to ensure their success (Rosenfeld & Richman 2003, p. 69).

Imagining what the life of these students is like is difficult, especially for educators whose focus generally includes the preparation of all of his or her students for state-mandated testing and overall comprehension of subject material. For these reasons, it is often harder for students who are living out-of-home to adjust to the classroom; teachers are often focused on other things and do not understand what is going on outside of the classroom (CREATE Foundation, 2003). Chaotic or unstable home environments, sometimes including several moves and the possibility of returning home to their birth parents or to yet another placement in the near future produces anxiety, fear, and anger within these students (Lowenthal, 2001), while "unsettling placement changes" can contribute negative effects on a youth's educational progress (Harker et al., 2003). In addition, academically at-risk youth in out-of-home care have social support challenges as well. Generally, students in a "typical" home are more likely to receive social support such as attention, listening, and appreciation from parents, neighbors, teachers, friends while those in out-of-home care are not; "students in out-of-home placement perceive receiving less teacher support than students not in out-of-home placement" (Rosenfeld & Richman, 2003, p. 79).

Considering the number of hours a student spends at home compared to those spent at school, Brodie (2001) finds it logical to surmise that the family situation of a student will directly affect his/her behavior and performance at school, and in addition, in group homes there is a higher concentration of youths likely to experience problems in school. Overall, these students have weaker cognitive abilities, poorer academic performance and classroom achievement,

and they demonstrate inappropriate school-related behaviors more frequently (Altshuler, 2003). Additionally, 25 to 50% have developmental delays or evidence of psychological disorders (Zetlin et al., 2003) and they are 13 times more likely to have statements of special educational needs (Jackson & Martin, 2002). In addition, The Casey Foundation, a national foundation dedicated to improving the lives of youths in care, found that children in foster care drop out of school at twice the rate of other students.

Perhaps these failures can be attributed to needs such as those previously described, but sometimes there is no evidence of a delay or disorder. In these cases, Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) found in their research that the lack of achievement can be attributed simply to the fact that the student is disaffected due to the fact that s/he is not involved in any of the school or class placement decisions. In fact, they found that "educational placements perceived as 'solutions' could represent a solution to the professionals' operational difficulties rather than to a pupil's educational difficulties" (Fletcher-Campbell & Archer 2003, p 61).

Besides academic performance, attendance rates of youths in out-of-home care, when compared with those of other students, were poor (Conger & Rebeck, 2001). Lower attendance rates, coupled with the transiency of many students in out-of-home care and various "emotional distractions" such as uncertainty about the future (Noble/Hunter School of Social Work), may contribute to the statistics found by Burley and Halpern (2001):

- o Foster youth score an average 15 to 20 percentile points lower than non-foster youth in statewide tests

- 59% of foster youth complete high school compared to 86% non-foster youth
- Twice as many foster youth have repeated a grade
- Twice as many foster youth are enrolled in special education programs
- Foster youth are 75% less likely to complete high school when compared with other 11th graders.

Another factor to consider, which was raised by both Jackson (1994) and Vinnerljung (2005), is the age at which the youth is placed into care. They found that the youths in care in England as well as those in Sweden were more likely to succeed academically if they were younger at the time of placement in care than if they were older. Both researchers noted that the youths who were in care from a younger age had a better chance to establish relationships with their care givers and remain in a stable placement as opposed to those placed as pre-teen and teenagers, who were more likely placed into care due to their own misbehaviors.

Oftentimes, at-risk youth can perceive that they have little opportunity to move up in society, and therefore they "have no claims to opportunities to participate fully in American society, [and] they are more likely to become disengaged from social institutions" (Stevens, 2002, p. 165). On the other hand, according to Franklin (2000), the very terms "risk" and "resilience" seem to be somewhat subjective as a youth's "perceptions of stressors and protective factors" must be considered. For instance, "If a young person does not perceive elements in their environment to be traumatic and achievement limiting" the information colleted from a researcher will be interpreted from his or her

perspective and not necessarily from the youth's (Franklin, 2000, p. 10). However, it does seem that if these youth are struggling to meet basic needs such as safety, food, shelter, and clothing on a daily basis, then education has logically become a "secondary issue" (Diamond 2001). Therefore, without dedicated intervention programs or strategies in place, results such as those described above will become the status quo.

Alternative School Settings

In practice, the majority of schools and teachers tend to cater to a minority of "compliant" students in their instruction methods and approach to education. These students, who comprise a small core of every classroom, do what they are asked to do, while a few others are "included" because their behavior and academic performance is deemed "acceptable" by school authorities. However, as students who are in care most often cannot fit into either of these molds, they become "disaffected" and don't care, "excluded", or even of the "zero status" cohort, and the school system fails them (National Testing & Advisory Service for Looked After Children and Children in Need, 2006). As a result, many alternative school settings are being developed to specifically address the needs of children who have been placed in out-of-home care.

In a study done on the education of youths in foster care for the Bay Area Social Services in California, the following recommendations were made:

1. develop strategies for increased communication and information sharing between school and child welfare systems
2. utilize special education classes for children with behavioral problems
3. offer school credit in less than whole blocks for academic semesters

4. continue to study school issues facing foster children

(Choice et al., 2001)

It seems as if alternative school settings are allowing themselves the opportunity to follow these recommendations. Burley and Halpern discovered in 2001 while studying youths in foster care in Washington State, that there are two "models" of schooling these students: as a community-based or segregated school-based program with continuous intakes (academics in the morning and life skills or specific affective instruction in the afternoon) or as an integrated school-based setting, many times with an IEP.

While there is literature to support the merits of both of these educational options for youths in care, Zetlin et al. (2004a) stated that too often youths in residential care were at a distinct disadvantage because the schools found on campus had less resources and lacked credentialed teachers. Conversely, when placed in schools in the community, several of the issues already raised (i.e. teacher not sensitive to certain subjects, no accommodations made for students in care, lack of complete school records), bring to the surface the question as to the effectiveness of schooling these youths in an inclusive setting as well.

One example of a type of community school serving youths in out-of-home care is the "full-service school", which is based on the concept that providing a school that provides other social services will aid families with academically at-risk students. In typical school settings, services are fragmented, as only educational services are provided, and require parents to travel to several different places to access health care and social services. When caring for foster youths, many of whom are academically at-risk, the full-service school is a welcome option. These schools include the following six components: extended

hours for learning, a school-based health clinic, mandated parental involvement, improvements in community surrounding the school, exposure to the world through field trips, and a focus on long-term outcomes and student success (Dryfoos, 2003). To accomplish all of these tasks in one setting, the staff members of these schools have agreed to be willing to shift their professional roles and collaborate and coordinate services; the staff participates in joint planning and shared service delivery (Harris & Hoover, 2003).

Another type of segregated school-based program is the "unconditional school." Contrary to the zero-tolerance policy adopted by an increasing number of schools, the unconditional school was created to connect with the learner and keep every student in class. Teachers in this school setting need to receive tremendous support from other staff members and often have the opportunity for discussing problematic students with other staff members; this gives them the opportunity to tap each of the staff members' strengths and solve problems in a team setting (Lloyd, 2001). In his writing about an "antidote" for zero-tolerance, Conrad Farner (2002, p. 22) found that the solution to ejecting at-risk students from class is to create a community "characterized by interpersonal relationships." He also found that providing a variety of programs, strategies, and opportunities for students to become a part of this community was essential; having smaller schools, looping, block scheduling, and a "multi-purpose period" at the end of each day were particularly helpful tools in developing student involvement and investment (Farner, 2002, p. 21-22).

Students placed in out-of-home care can obviously benefit from learning in either of the educational settings mentioned above. One specific example of an alternative educational setting, which has been successful in educating students

in care is Storefront Alternate, located in British Columbia (Hughes & Lougheed, 1991). There are 24 full-time students between the ages of 15 and 18 years in attendance. All of the students have been placed in out-of-home care and have case workers, teachers, and family counselors working together to develop educational plans and deliver effective education in all areas: academic, social, and emotional. As each team member is expected to play an active role in the education of the school's students and the application of an affective curriculum, Storefront Alternate has seen positive changes in many of its students' behavior and academic performance due to the implementation of the "Nine Factors of Effective Schooling" listed below:

1. Strong leadership = strong partnership – team members share philosophy, are consistent, empathetic, flexible, patient, student-centered

2. Positive climate – help students build social skills, focus on individual strengths, develop student responsibility through tasks

3. High expectations – hold high expectations and help students to reach them through use of mastery learning in non-competitive atmosphere

4. Recognition of achievement – students receive positive recognition and awards for attendance, academic accomplishments, etc.

5. Quality instruction – ongoing professional development for staff, especially in areas of cooperative learning, peer coaching, and peer counseling

6. Quality curriculum and programs – relevant curriculum for the learner

7. Supportive organization and management – school staff and administration work together

8. Assessment / revision – accreditation, internal assessment specific to alternative education, annual reports

9. Supportive community – school seeks to build a positive relationship with the community

(Hughes and Lougheed, 1991, p. 51-52).

A Classroom Perspective

Many times, teachers and administrators can view youths in out-of-home care as "transitory" and they do not invest their efforts into helping them as much as the other students (Casey Foundation, 2004). Due to the typical transient nature of youths in care, school records are frequently "incomplete and difficult to access," and "substantial barriers" exist (e.g. school records were lost), which make it difficult for schools to access the information needed to gather together resources perhaps vital to a youth's academic success (Zetlin et al., 2004b). For example, many schools are less willing to consider how to accommodate these youths because they are not aware of what could be considered "critical data." Instead, they simply adhere to a zero-tolerance policy and automatically suspend them in instances of misbehavior when they could have allowed for a specific intervention or accommodation; "rather than having their needs met by caring adults who are committed to educating all youth, these young people get to sleep in, watch television, and wander about the community with peers in similar situations… Equally disturbing is the very notion that depriving at-risk youth of what they need most, and educating in a caring environment, has somehow come to be construed as an acceptable consequence" (Farner, 2003, p. 19).

Conversely, when the teachers and administrators are unaware of a student's status as a foster child, or a youth who has been placed in out-of-home care, they do not recognize his or her risk status, and do not have an opportunity to respond to it (Rosenfeld & Richman, 2003). Many times, a teacher will ask students to bring in a baby picture or construct a family tree. These types of assignments are often times extremely difficult for students who do not know or are not living with their birth family (Casey Foundation, 2004).

Then the question is raised, which has brought about some debate: should these youths be singled out or left anonymous in a system which could fail them? (Kellam, 2000). If teachers were made aware of students in their classroom who have been placed in care, they could look at their routines and expectations and ask themselves if it is appropriate for youths in care. In addition, the number of youths in care tend to be a small handful of students when compared to the number of all school children, and this is one of the reasons social workers may experience difficulties working with the school system effectively (Hayden, 2005).

Brodie (2001) found that in some instances, when the school was made aware of a student's non-traditional living situation in a group home, too much knowledge was provided to the teacher and it was either used against the student or there were no allowances made despite the knowledge. She added that the residential care staff often felt the children living with them in a group home were stigmatized at school and excluded from many activities and opportunities, while social workers failed to see evidence to support the staff's perspective.

On the other hand, at the Noble/Hunter College of Social Work, researchers had a different perspective as they found that teachers can help contribute to the social and emotional needs of these students by attending to their interactions with other students and being understanding of any fluctuations of performance or behavior. In addition, teachers can help by backing off of academic expectations, when appropriate, and setting these youths up for success in other areas, such as taking care of a classroom pet, watering plants, or passing out supplies ("A Conversation With an Educator," 2004).

Another factor working against youths in care is the lack of a standardized curriculum among school districts and/or states. This inconsistency means that whenever a youth moves from one home to another they can suddenly find themselves behind and direct them down a path to failure; they find themselves in a new classroom setting with a new textbook, new material, new expectations (Casey Foundation, 2004).

However, taking the steps to build on the other talents a student may have can turn the student back in the right direction. Adopting a constructivist approach can provide students with an opportunity to use their learning and life experiences in a positive manner (Chrystal, 2002) and perhaps combat the challenges of a changing curriculum. By its design, progressive educators provide a more humane way of teaching in a social atmosphere for students to see kindness in action through practices such as the use of democracy in the classroom to determine its direction (Dewey, 1938). Taking into consideration the sense of powerlessness felt by youths who have been removed from their homes and put into care, this type of classroom atmosphere would indeed be a welcome one. In addition, specific techniques suggested for the success of students in out-

of-home care include giving reasons, increasing wait time, giving a sense of control to the students in the classroom, simplifying tasks, including more work on functional life and social skills, pro-active seating arrangements, and peer help or peer tutoring (Lowenthal, 2001).

Ingredients for Success

When one takes into consideration the life experiences of these youths, it is no wonder there are difficulties associated with providing them a quality educational experience. However, looking at what these youths, many of whom have emotional and behavioral disorders, actually bring to the classroom (not only what they take from it) is critical (Chrystal, 2002). Therefore, when one considers curriculum and practices for our schools, it is important to look at the factor of resiliency. According to Lambert (2003 p. 60), "Students who are resilient are able to bounce back from adversity and resist being pulled into hopelessness by difficult environments. These students display self-direction, problem-solving capacities, social competence, and participation in the world around them; they also contribute to others and possess a sense of purpose and future."

Building resiliency in the classroom, according to Henderson and Milstein (2003), is fundamental to helping at-risk youth survive and succeed in school. The resiliency process, then, has been broken down into the following six steps:

1. Increase bonding: involve family members in school activities and planning, provide opportunities for students to bond through club and after or before-school activities, use teaching strategies that address multiple intelligences and learning styles

2.	Set clear, consistent boundaries: involve students in rule-making, apply consequences with a caring attitude, write policy in a strengths-based manner, be sure everyone understands (students, parents, teachers, administration)

3.	Teach life skills: use a cooperative learning approach, take advantage of school counselors in problem-solving process, incorporate life skills into a health curriculum

4.	Provide caring and support: notice all students and know their names, draw out all students to participate, use an incentive program for positive behaviors

5.	Set and communicate high expectations: allow students to know the work they are doing is important and they can do it, heterogeneous student grouping, interest based curricula, flexible evaluation techniques

6.	Provide opportunities for meaningful participation: view students as resources and not observers, allow students to organize and lead projects and events

(Henderson and Milstein, 2003, p. 15)

Focusing their research on all students, Sanders and Jordan (2000) concluded that the higher the level of a teacher-student relationship, the higher the level of the student investment in learning, and therefore the higher the level of academic achievement. As foster youths can sometimes not achieve the same level of attachment as easily as other students (Jackson & Martin, 2002), the factor

of relationship development becomes even more important to the overall academic success of the student in out-of-home care.

In a study of academically successful youths in England, Jackson & Martin corroborated Henderson and Milstein's findings as they found that there were common factors which affected their success:

1.   being like other people; having normal things to do such as hobbies or activities

2.   positive encouragement from significant others

3.   care-givers had a good education and held high expectations for their performance

4.   good relationships with social workers

5.   regular school attendance and feeling "normal" in this setting

6.   overcoming stereotyping and discrimination (being in care comes with a stigma)

7.   access to practical resources like a desk or quiet space to study, resource books available

8.   teacher and school support

9.   unconditional support for everyone – not just the "smart kids"

10.   encouragement for higher education

11.   a "guardian angel" – a special relationship with one person

(adapted from Jackson & Martin, 2002, p. 124-128)

All of these factors not only helped these youths maintain a stable placement and maintain continuous relationships with others, but also kept them in the same school (Jackson & Martin, 2002). Furthermore, having this stable placement can

also have a positive effect on youth's perception of his or her educational progress; whether in foster or residential care, a stable home environment which encourages and supports a youth's education can result in a perceived improvement in progress at school (Harker et al., 2003 & Harker et al., 2004).

Much of the needed support to succeed for these youths may come from a stable placement, however, it can also come from the school environment. While the teacher provides his or her support through seeing the positive attributes of every student (i.e. Marc the musician, not Marc the foster child or at-risk youth), the school can provide high standards for everyone, student leadership opportunities, looping, and guidance programs (Lambert, 2003). These programs are essential as they allow the struggling student a chance to become a part of the classroom community. "Without programs specifically designed to meet the individual educational and other needs of foster children, the children frequently end up in the criminal justice system or on welfare when they become adults" (Zetlin et al., 2003, p. 106). Whatever model is adopted, if students are placed in a program designed with a focus on educational outcomes, they will succeed (Rosenfeld & Richman, 2003).

Also, educating educators about the reasons why a youth may be placed in out-of-home care and the roles of social workers and foster or group home parents is especially helpful. One important aspect of this education should include cross-disciplinary training and meetings between social workers and educators, which would help to bridge professional gaps and build important connections for youth success (Rice & Harris, 2003).

In addition to a positive home environment and a supportive atmosphere at school, these students receive support from other sources such as social

workers, family, and peers, as noted in Figure 1, constructed by Harker et al. in 2003 after they interviewed 80 youths in care.

Other positive school factors noted by Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) in their study of youths placed in out-of-home care in the city of London as well as several surrounding counties and burroughs included:

- appropriate school placement decisions

- placement decisions included youth and relevant adults in discussion

- early interventions made as appropriate

- tutoring available

- consistent method used to identify student needs and progress

- pastoral support opportunities

- curricular support opportunities

- access to external support, as needed

From an even broader perspective, effective leaders in the school system, or "wizards," as they are called by McLaughlin, Irby, and Langman (2001), who have successfully worked with inner-city, "at-risk" youth have five common characteristics. First, they found that all of the leaders they studied saw potential in the youth; the youths are not viewed as "the problem," but as the result of social institutions to meet their needs correctly. Second, the youth was the focus instead of a program or an institution. Next, these leaders saw their work as a way to "give back" to others what they may have received growing up; they see their work as a mission, not as a job. Also, they believe they have a sense of efficacy in reaching youths of all ages and circumstances. Last, these leaders
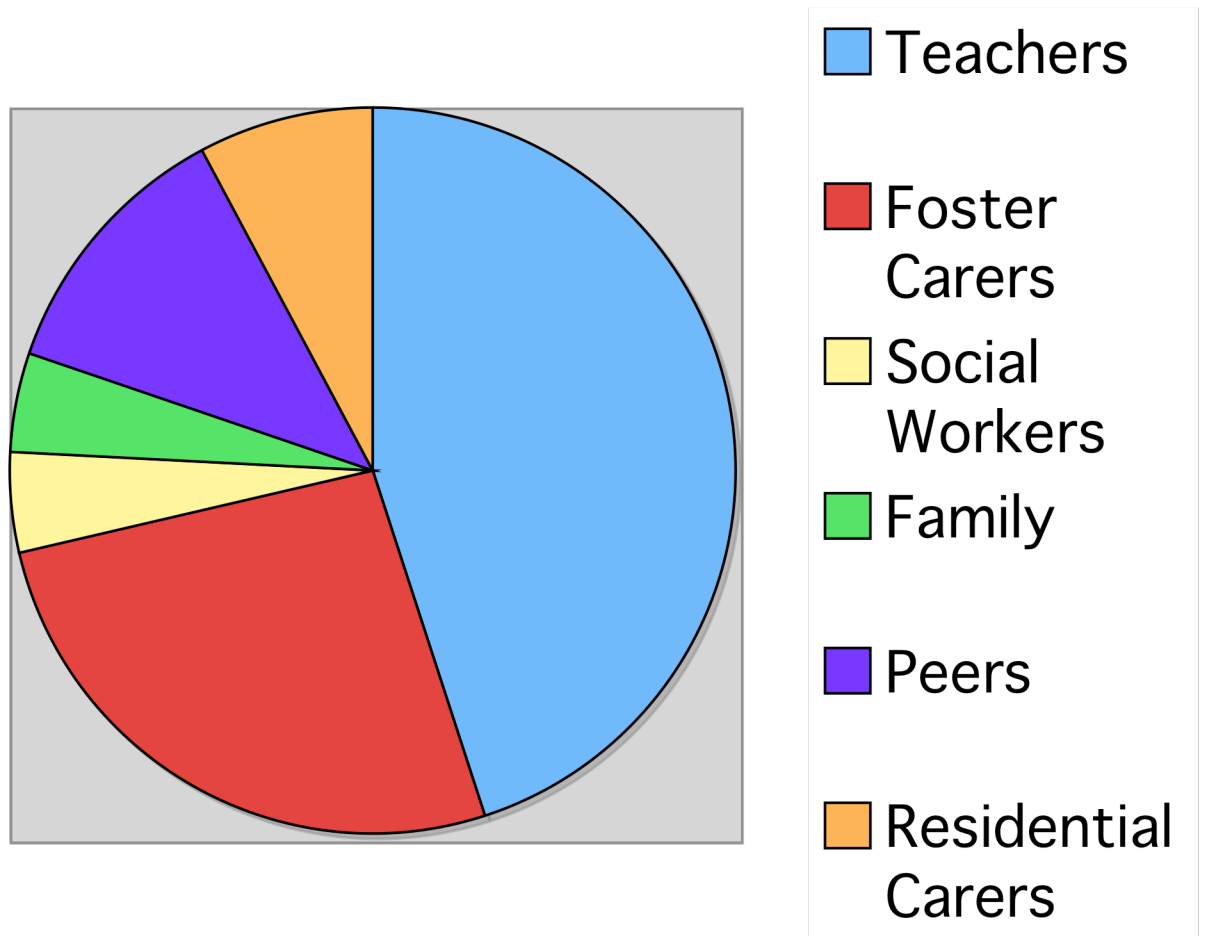
Figure 1. Student Support Services

stress authenticity in their programs as well as in their interactions with the youths.

Legislation and Attempts at Improvement

If "society expects youth to construct productive lives based on a solid educational foundation," as McMillen, Auslander et al (2003, p. 476) claim, then the educational aspirations and academic performance of each of these youths should be a primary focus of every teacher, child welfare worker, administrator, and legislator across the country. In a study of 262 youths who were a part of an Independent Living Program in St. Louis County, MO, McMillen, Auslander et al (2003) found that despite the grim statistics that 58% of these youths had failed a class and 16% had been expelled, 70% of the youths wanted to attend college. This seemingly paradoxical data points out the simple fact that these youths want to succeed, but are not provided with the appropriate tools to do so.

More research exists and has been published in the last ten years than ever before about meeting the needs of children in out-of-home care, perhaps due to the increasing numbers – the number of children in out-of-home care has increased 90% in the last 10 years (Sharma et al., 2001) – yet the information available today can still be difficult to find, especially concerning those youths in the United States; far more research has been conducted and policy developed in the United Kingdom and Australia. However, due to the growing numbers of youths in care, efforts are beginning to be made to address their special educational needs. In 2003, over 500,000 children were in out-of-home care in the United States, and 76% of them were school aged (Gesiriech, O'Neil, & Perez,

2003). In other words, 380,000 students (10,847 in North Carolina) are awaiting an education in our classrooms (Child Welfare League of America, 2000).

According to Sandra Altshueler (2003), the child welfare and education systems have a history of not working well together. Jackson and Martin (2002) corroborated her statements as they noted social workers give education a low priority and "see education as someone else's business" (Jackson & Martin, 2000, p. 122). Researchers conclude that overall, social welfare agencies and the educational system fail to cooperate with one another. The studies, which range from groups as small as 25 to as large as 15,000 youths, focus on youths from California, New York City, North Carolina, Washington, and Ohio. They have made recommendations, which seem to point to one major missing link: communication among agencies and service providers.

One of the studies conducted in California tracked the initiatives of the counties to follow the state's "educational passport" legislation, a new system designed to follow youths from placement to placement so that their educational progress can be tracked. Despite these efforts, the results were again very bleak: most "passports" were found to be severely incomplete, with only 20% of the 12,978 children's files containing any educational information (Parrish et al., 2001). Similarly, in the state of Washington, PL 101-239 requires every child's written case plan to include specific educational plans, however, as of August 2001, only 14% of the 5,552 children in care had any information related to education included in their files (Burley & Halpern, 2001).

Similarly, Brodie (2001) points out that because the social and education systems have developed separately from one another, that a lack of educational

information is included in case files as youth are placed in out of home care such as group homes.

In Australia, the CREATE Foundation (www.create.org.au) has dedicated itself to improving opportunities for the children in the public care system. In order to help meet the educational needs of these children who have been placed out-of-home, they have published a national educational "Report Card" for "Australian Children and Young People in Care" since 2001. And, in response to the 2002 Report Card, the Queensland Department of Families includes educational achievement as a part of its "Strategic Plan 2001-2006." Unlike any formulated national plan in the United States, Australia has worked to blend the responsibilities of its agencies to help the youths they serve. Minister Bligh established the Education Caucus Committee in December of 2001, and the Queensland Department of Families reports regularly to the committee on this very issue ever since (CREATE Foundation, 2003).

Like Australian initiatives, the United Kingdom has worked to serve its population of youth in public care. The National Teaching and Advisory Service (2005) has developed a "Personal Education Plan," or a PEP, to be included as a part of the required "Care Plan" for each of the youths in care. This plan is designed as an "overarching education plan" to include all aspects of other educational plans such as IEPs, etc. These plans are written within 20 days of a youth's placement in school and reviewed every six months, and the responsibility for these plans lies in the hands of the two most essential forces in a youth's educational life: the youth's social worker and the youth's school. While the youth's social worker is responsible for initiating the writing of the

plan, other key individuals are also included: the youth, a designated teacher, the family, and caregivers (The National Teaching and Advisory Service, 2005).

These plans, although they are designed to provide direction and structure to those responsible for the education of youths in care, are not yet used consistently and have not been in existence long enough to provide results as to their efficacy. Hayden (2005), found that due to a lack of confidence in dealing with the educational system and the staff turnover of social workers, the PEP implementation and follow-up was not occurring one hundred percent. Also, she found that youth participation in the PEP development process was occurring less than half of the time. An additional hurdle that Hayden (2005) outlined was the lack of resources and supervision provided to youths in a residential care facility prevented the full implementation of a student's PEP.

On a national level in the United States, the government has developed the IDEA legislation, under which is the allowance for an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP. These documents certainly help students for whom they have been written, however, unlike the PEP developed for youths in care in England, living in out-of-home care does not qualify as a disability, and these children do not always qualify for services; "not all evaluators consider a child's unstable home life and placement history as a qualifying disablement" (Kellam, 2000, p. 3). Unfortunately, if the care-givers of these youth are not familiar with legislation or the workings of the school system, they are oftentimes unable to access the services needed to get an IEP written, which would provide written documentation to be used by all of the children's educators, regardless of future placement (Kellam, 2000).

After all, "If learning were the real issue, few students would have difficulty at school. Most of what happens in school is really about schooling, not learning, and our students have typically come to that realization. Schooling, including the framework and form of instruction and the mismatch of the school's social system to our students, is truly the problem" (Chrystal, 2002, p. 23). These issues demand further examination. What other factors contribute to the academic success of the half million foster youths in our nation? How can we ensure their academic success while assuring ourselves they are not "throwaway kids" to tax our welfare and prison systems in the future? Regardless of the number of years a youth has spent in care (from a few months to most of his or her life), there is no guarantee that he or she can care for him/herself after being discharged (Mallon 1998). Indeed, education is the only answer. In the following chapter, these questions are examined through a series of interviews and observations with youths, group home care givers, group home administrators, and educators.

METHODOLOGY

As too many youths in out-of-home care fail to succeed academically, it is essential to identify which factors included in a selected curriculum lend themselves to the success of these students. The following chapter should be considered a blueprint for all of the research done during the case study of the Boys & Girls Homes School at Lake Waccamaw (BGHS). The primary purpose of conducting this study is to help answer the question to the problem posed: how do we help youths in out-of-home care to achieve academic success? In attempting to answer a part of this question, this study was conducted to explain if the application of particular curricular components at BGHS contribute to a student's overall academic success.

School Setting

The Boys & Girls Homes School at Lake Waccamaw is situated on the Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina, Inc. campus; a 150 acre residential group care facility located in Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina. While a total of 72 boys and girls may reside in the cottages on the campus, less than half of them will attend the school at any given time as it serves students from grade 4 to grade 8. Typically, the average school population ranges from 15 to 30 students.

Although the school provides services only those youths living on the Boys & Girls Homes campus, all five of its teachers, two administrative assistants and principal are hired as state employees by the Columbus County Board of Education.

The physical setting is small, but adequate. The teachers on staff each have their own room plus a common area, which serves as the computer lab and library. The gymnasium is also housed in the school building. Each classroom has at least one computer available for student use, but other technology available is limited to overhead projectors; there is no use of power point presentations.

Approach to Research, Methods of Data Collection and Instruments

The Boys & Girls Homes School was selected as the object of a single case study as it is the only facility in Southeastern North Carolina that exclusively serves students who are placed in out-of-home care; all of its students reside on the campus of the residential care facility, Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina.

The teachers and administrators at the Boys & Girls Homes School, Teaching Parent staff and administrators on campus, and social workers were selected based on their work and experience with youths in out-of-home care. A total of fifteen "authorities" were asked to participate as a resource in the research process; all of them agreed to take part. These authorities were selected because they were professional acquaintances of the researcher and had worked at least six months with youths in care. The positions of these authorities varied. In some cases, s/he was at the level of program director, and in other cases s/he was at the level of direct care or social worker. The table below illustrates the variety of authority levels of the participants. It is important to note that those individuals were selected based upon their ability to provide data on the education of youth in out-of-home care, and not on a particular authority type.

Type of Authority	Number of Authorities
Program Director / School Principal	2
Social Worker	4
School Teacher	5
Teaching Parent / Caregiver	5
N=15	

Table 1. Participant Authorities

These fifteen individuals were interviewed in a private, one-on-one setting at their place of work: school classroom, office, or residential care cottage. In the cases where the individual was not available for a personal interview, they were given a copy of the survey to complete and return in writing within ten days.

Twenty youths were initially selected as possible interviewees based on their attendance at the Boys & Girls Homes School, however, after contact with the Institutional Review Board at the University, it was discovered that the youths all needed to be at least 18 years of age. Therefore, the total number of youths available to interview on the campus of Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina was five; three boys and two girls. These five youths made up the representative sampling of youths who were interviewed, and it was assumed that their educational experiences would mirror those of the students in attendance at the Boys & Girls Homes School as well as those in the general population of youths placed in out-of-home care. They were all interviewed in a private, one-on-one setting in their cottage home on the campus of Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina. These interviews included both open-ended and close-ended questions to gather information about their care and educational experience. When the youths provided information about individuals or situations that proved to be exceptionally helpful to them, they were asked to explain in specific detail what they found most helpful to them. All of the youths were at least 18 years of age, and it is believed they had an adequate ability to reflect upon their past educational experiences in an objective manner.

Surveys were created specifically for each of the survey groups (e.g. youths, teachers, administrators, teaching parents, social workers), and included

both open-ended questions and several items to rate using a Likert scale. The questions included in the surveys are based on an individual's perception of their role in a youth's academic life and how a youth who is placed in out-of-home care can achieve success in school. The purpose of these questions was to elucidate common factors among the groups surveyed, thus creating a list of contributing factors to a youth's positive academic experience. Samples of each of these surveys are included in Appendix A.

In addition to the surveys conducted, observational field notes were taken during visits to classrooms at the Boys & Girls Homes School between December 2004 and December 2005. These observations were designed to measure program/curriculum implementation of the Teaching Family Model in the Classroom (TFMC) and the All Kinds of Minds (AKOM) programs against checklists that included the components of each program. For example, TFMC requires the application of a specific method of behavioral praise or correction; when praising a student, the teacher should first provide words of praise (i.e. good job, nice going, excellent), then s/he should identify the behavior based on a predetermined skill set (i.e. following instructions, showing respect, accepting consequences), and then assign a positive consequence (a number of "points," usually ranging between 250-1000 per teaching interaction).

The other program "checklist" was determined by the application of a student's individualized learning profiles and recommendations made by the AKOM assessment of his/her strengths and weaknesses. In these cases, one or several of the students in a classroom had been assessed, and after reviewing a student's file, the teacher's performance would be measured against the

suggested accommodations. In the particular case outlined in the sample student

assessment below, the "checklist" would include the strategies listed:

Weakness   Strategies
1. attention- mental energy • pick topics that motivate her
                             • play-doh or kush ball for her to play with to keep
                             her alert during class (with her understanding why
                             she's using it)

2. attention- processing   • short bursts of information
   controls   • have her summarize or illustrate after explanations
                             • state "this is important" to flag major points

3. active working memory   • small chunks of information
   procedural mem./recall   • she makes notecards of information
                             • underline, circle, highlight information
                             • journal or summarize reading
                             • checklist for grammatical errors / proofreading
                             notebook

In addition to the interviews and observations, data was also collected

through a series of informal discussions with the school teachers and

administrators concerning the education of the students at the school. These

discussions may have included one individual or several, and were considered

an open forum for them to self-report difficulties they were having with program

implementation or to discuss any challenges they were experiencing with a

student or students in the classroom.

Analysis of Data

The first step in the analysis of the data gathered was to develop profiles

of the youths, the teachers and other adults involved in a youth's education, and

finally the school itself. These profiles included the information gathered during

interviews and observations such as the number of years a youth has been in care

or the number of years an authority had experience working with youths in care,

how many school placements had a youth had while in care or how many youths in care had an authority worked with during his/her years of service, what type of "school history" a youth had developed (i.e. attendance, suspension, discipline problems, grades, retention), and with what types of school-related issues an authority had experience working. These profiles were then compared directly to the profiles and studies noted in a review of the literature in order to determine the similarities and differences among the subjects observed and surveyed.

Next, a comparative analysis of the perspectives on key questions or issues between the youth, and authorities was then conducted. These key questions and issues included two major components: 1) the roles in which the authorities placed themselves as helping the youths achieve academic success compared to the youths' perceptions, and 2) school performance and behavior reports from youths and levels of satisfaction of youth behavior reported by authorities. It was determined whether or not youths were achieving "academic success" as measured against the following criteria:

1. Youths were passing classes with a C average or better

2. Youths were attending class

3. Youths were staying in class (i.e. youth was not sent out)

4. Behavioral issues were determined to be a non-issue or they were decreasing in number

5. Youths valued importance of education (i.e. proud of his or her academic achievement, plans to attend college or finish high school)

Finally, classroom observations for curricula/program implementation of TFMC and AKOM, and overall school climate was measured against the "Nine

Factors of Effective Schooling" to determine to what extent these factors were present at BGHS.

Limitations

This sampling was limited by the number of youths on the Boys & Girls Homes campus who are considered "legal adults" (age 18 years or older) and can therefore consent to be interviewed and release information about their educational experiences.

The results from the surveys and observations are limited by the fact that the majority of those surveyed were working in one single location and it is unknown to what extent the information can be generalized outside of the controlled environment of a school on a group home campus to the overall population of youths placed in out-of-home care. Also, gathering this data from the various named sources required the following assumptions:

1. quality of teachers, teaching parents, social workers, and administrators;

2. truthfulness of all parties; and

3. ability of youths to accurately reflect upon their past experiences.

As this study is limited to this particular location and the programs/curricula implemented as described, the scope of findings described in the next chapter will also be limited; these limitations, however, simply further generate the importance of the consideration of conducting similar research in other studies to determine if academic success can be achieved by this population without the implementation of a particular curriculum, academic

atmosphere, or other variables outside of a student's sheer individual will to succeed.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Following the methodology outlined in the previous chapter, the data was collected and analyzed in order to discover key components of the curriculum at BGHS that contribute to the academic success in youths who have been placed in out of home care. The following groups were interviewed: youths, teachers, administrators (both group home and school administrators), cottage teaching parents, and social workers.

The findings and analysis of the data collected is presented below in a format, which follows that of the literature review. Each section reports the appropriate findings and compares them to the findings in the literature already reported.

Typical Educational Profile of Youths, Authorities involved in Youths' Academic Lives

The youths interviewed, while having different family histories, life experiences, and reasons for placement into out-of-home care, all shared a common trait: they had all achieved some degree of academic success. As previously mentioned, all of these youths were 18 years of age and had the ability to reflect upon his or her past educational experiences. It is believed that the results found in this study are consistent with youths of all ages who have been placed in out-of-home care due to the fact that their experiences are consistent with the experiences of youths in care found in the literature.

The youths interviewed came from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, but the majority of them were African American. In addition, the

amount of time in care varied as well; the range of time spent in foster or group homes was as short as 11 months to almost ten years (see table 4.1).

Regardless of the time these youths had spent in care, all of them had experienced at least one move that required them to change schools and adjust to new teachers, find new friends, and become familiar with a new schedule and classwork in addition to having their lives turned upside down by living in a completely new place, having new caregivers, and adjusting to new rules and expectations. Surprisingly, when asked about the effect the move(s) had on their academic performance, all of them stated that it had no effect. This finding seems to be contrary to the literature as frequent moves were often cited as a source of academic failure and the youths' interpretations of the effects that moves had on their performance may have been exaggerated; further into the interview process, many youths did admit that their grades had improved because their placement was now stable.

Along with stability, another factor cited by all of the social workers interviewed as contributing to their success was having one individual in particular who had helped them to succeed. As Jackson and Martin (2002) found in their study of academically successful youths in England, all five youths had a "guardian angel" of their own. For one of the youths, it was a teacher, for others it was a caregiver or counselor at the group home, while another said it was an uncle with whom he was still in regular contact. As one youth from BGH stated, "A teacher [helped me], she was my science teacher and I slept in there but passed my tests. Then she asked me why I slept when I could be doing work… She would always check my report cards to make sure I was doing good." This indeed contrasts with the majority of findings from researchers at the CREATE

Youth information, n=5	
Subject 1	18 year old Native American male
Subject 2	18 year old African American male
Subject 3	18 year old African American male
Subject 4	18 year old Caucasian female
Subject 5	18 year old African American female
Average time in care (in months)	53.2
Average time in care (in years)	4.43

Table 2. Youth Information

Foundation (2003), Lowenthal (2001), and Harker et al. (2003); they all concluded that students in out-of-home care generally lacked the social support necessary to succeed.

While these students seem to have found the support that is so crucial to maintaining their motivation to do well in school, the numbers found in the research as well as the results from surveying social workers in the field do not yield such favorable results. One social worker who had worked with over 300 youths in her 8 ½ years of experience said that although she worked primarily with younger children, very few of those youths old enough to complete high school actually did; she stated that "less than ten" received a diploma and none went to college. She did go on to relate the story of one youth out of the more than three hundred who had "done something." In her words, he "went into the military, and he married another foster child. They met when they were both at [a named] Children's Home. They had a baby also. He's the only one I can really think of that's really done something. When they turn 18, they go right back to that same home, even if they were removed from it."

As far as in school behavior, the youths interviewed all self-reported in-school behaviors that corroborate Altshuler's (2003) findings that students in out of home care demonstrate inappropriate school-related behaviors more frequently; all of them had been suspended from school, all of them had been at least one fight while at school, four out of the five had failed a class, and the majority had failed a grade.

Overall, it seems as though these five youths have received the "extraordinary educational support" that Rosenfeld & Richman (2003) discussed, nor were they "disaffected" as Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) found many

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of the youths to be, as three of the five had completed high school with plans to

attend college or participate in Job Corps. The other two were in the 11th and 12th

grades.

Perhaps their success can be attributed not only to the involvement of

positive authority figures in their lives, but to their levels of resilience. All five of

the youths, were open to discussing a their placement histories as well as their

past academic experiences. This openness illustrates Franklin's (2000) findings

that if a youth does not find his or her surroundings "limiting," s/he will not feel

limited and therefore will be able to succeed, regardless of what anyone else's

feelings that s/he is limited due to past experiences such as trauma or abuse.

School Setting at the Boys and Girls Homes School

The Boys & Girls Homes School (BGHS) exclusively serves the youths in

residence on the campus of the Boys & Girls Homes residential group care

facility. This school provides a segregated school-based program with

continuous intakes. All academic classes are taught before lunch and the

afternoon is reserved for tutoring, physical education, wood or metal working,

and shop classes. While Zetlin et al. (2004b) found that this type of school setting

had a distinct disadvantage because of a lack of resources and credentialed

teachers, considering the rather rural surroundings and community schools

available in the area, this finding would not necessarily hold true for BGHS.

Although the members of the teaching and administrative staff are state

employees and hired by the county school system, the unique school setting

allows for much more freedom in its application of behavioral guidelines and

expectations for the students in attendance. For example, while it has been found

that a disruptive student (sometimes especially one who is known to be in out-of-home care) is removed from the classroom, sent to in-school suspension or sent home for out-of-school suspension, BGHS uses a behavioral model consistent with the one used in the youths' living quarters across campus.

This model is called the Teaching Family Model (TFM) and similar to the concept of the unconditional school described by both Lloyd (2001) and Farner (2002), BGHS tries to keep all of the students in class all of the time. Of course, youths will be suspended when necessary, however, when they are sent home, these students return back to the supervision of their teaching parents in the cottages on campus. Here, the teaching parents help the youths to learn and practice the social skills they need to return back to the classroom.

Another curricular adaptation used in the school is Dr. Mel Levine's All Kinds of Minds program. The intent of this program is to develop highly individualized instruction for students who have failed in one or more areas in school. Underlying this program is the appreciation for the uniqueness of each person's mind. The teaching staff, together with the cottage Teaching Parents, recommends students for assessment by AKOM. This assessment provides each instructor with an in-depth analysis of a student's areas of strength and weakness. Based on this assessment, recommendations are made for adaptations for instruction and/or allowances for student behavior.

Both of these programs, along with the county-adopted character education program have, when applied consistently, helped to shape the atmosphere at BGHS for both teachers and learners. Other adaptations, some of which are similar to those described by Farner (2002) include looping, block scheduling, a multi-purpose period at the end of each day open for students to

come in for tutoring, behavioral point cards, and the incentive of earning the privilege to watch a movie each Friday afternoon.

Teaching at the Boys and Girls Homes School: Authority Perceptions of Their Role v. Youth Perception of Their Role

The teachers at BGHS have substantial experience working with students in the classroom; they all have between 4 and 25 years of experience, and two of the five have graduate degrees.

Fortunately, they are removed from the debate of whether or not students who are placed in out of home care should be identified to classroom teachers and administrators. All of the students at BGHS reside in a group home facility, and the teachers have substantial interaction with the students' teaching parents, consultants (on-site case managers), and some interaction with social workers. Although these classroom teachers are in the same situation as the majority of teaching professionals in that they are not aware of a student's detailed social history, they are fully aware of the behavioral issues a student is addressing at any given time.

When asked, all of the teachers responded that they were adequately satisfied with the behavior of the students in their classrooms. In addition, they were also satisfied with the level of teaching parent involvement. However, they were less than satisfied with the level of involvement of the social workers. As they saw their roles compared to those of the other authorities involved in a youth's life, they saw themselves first and foremost as educators and secondly as teachers of social skills or character education.

Teaching parents, on the other hand, saw themselves in a few different roles: support, role model, listener, protector, encourager. Two of the teaching parents interviewed made a specific point to state that they were the primary "teacher" in the lives of the youths as they were in a more "personal role" and "more hands-on with the youth and spend more time around the youth" than the teachers in school.

The third angle to this support network for the student in care is the role of the social worker. Of the four workers interviewed, three of them stated that they saw themselves as advocate for the youth through the foster parent. In other words, while they stated they were willing to do things like write letters or attend IEP meetings, they also expect the primary caregiver to attend to the academic needs of the student; one social worker stated, "the foster parent's role is to stay on top of the teacher."

Interestingly, the youths' perceptions of whom they saw as supportive and most helpful to them in school were mixed. Of the five youths interviewed, one said a teacher was the most helpful, three stated teaching parents or a family member provided the most help, and one said an on-site social worker was the most help. Again, in line with Jackson and Martin's (2002) findings that academically successful foster youths had someone who was a "guardian angel" to them, each of these five youths has found this individual in each of the different roles of the authorities involved in their lives.

Ingredients for Success – Measuring Youth and School Success

In order to identify the "ingredients for success" for youths placed in out of home care, the overall success of the students interviewed as well as the

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programs implemented at BGHS must first be determined. Examining the students' success, the following criteria was used:

1. Passing with a C average or better;

2. Attending class;

3. Staying in class (i.e. not sent out);

4. Behavioral issues are a non-issue;

5. Student values education, is proud of achievements, plans to finish high school and/or attend college.

All five students from Boys & Girls Homes viewed themselves as successful in school and met the criteria described above. In addition, 100% of them had future plans to attend college (two had already been accepted into a program).

When asked to explain why they were successful, the answers all pointed to a belief in themselves. They cited reasons such as not being a quitter, not watching television, completing homework assignments, or having a dedicated place like a desk to study. One of them described their will to work in this way: "I think about all the people that always put me down and say I'm never going to make something of myself. I take that and reverse it and make myself work harder." Another made the statement, "I tried my best and told myself I can do it." These comments indicate the students have a desire to perform and have succeeded due to their own efforts. These comments corroborate Lambert's findings about the resiliency of students as those who "are able to bounce back from adversity and resist being pulled into hopelessness by difficult environments. These students display self-direction, problem-solving capabilities, social competence…" (2003, p. 60).

Similarly, the majority of the social workers and educators interviewed stated that those youths who they had seen as particularly successful in school were motivated, willing to learn, and had a will to succeed. The teaching parents interviewed, however, all cited examples of external motivators for the students' success: praise, patience (from the teaching parent), availability of money for college from the group home.

Hand in hand with the student's own ability to succeed is the school's ability to provide an atmosphere that encourages student success. Taking the "Nine Factors of Effective Schooling" outlined by Hughes and Lougheed (1991) and comparing them to findings at BGHS, the following observations were made:

1. Strong leadership: the principal at BGHS provides continuous support of the teachers as any students who are sent out of class come directly to his office and he works with the student within the parameters of TFM until the student can return to class or be sent back to his/her cottage home;

2. Positive climate: classroom teachers are expected to praise students often for their specific academic and social behaviors (i.e. staying on task, listening skills, showing respect, following instructions), however, some of the teachers actively praise students while others do not;

3. High expectations: cooperative learning is in effect in all classrooms whenever academically appropriate, teachers will work with students in and out of class to ensure the lesson is understood completely;

4. Recognition of achievement: weekly incentive program provides students with a reward for positive behavior during the week, positive praise component of TFM, when applied, provides continuous recognition;

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5. Quality instruction: students are receiving instruction at an appropriate level and expected to learn the material;

6. Quality curriculum and programs: relevancy of the curriculum is sometimes questionable and the application of the TFM and AKOM programs provide quality when implemented consistency (some teachers implement these programs quite effectively while others do not);

7. Supportive organization and management: the liaison component between campus staff and school staff is absent, school staff often feels unsupported;

8. Assessment/revision: ongoing assessment of student progress occurs by all teachers;

9. Supportive community: the community outside the school is the residential care facility and the teaching parent staff who follow up on classroom assignments and assist with any student behavior problems.

Based on classroom visits and interviews with teachers and administrators, BGHS has many strengths to build upon. The assumption, based on these observations and all of the interviews conducted is that internal student motivation and drive, coupled with the school's strengths such as quality instruction, strong leadership, and high expectations contribute to overall student success.

The Effect of Legislation on the Boys and Girls Homes School

Legislation on a local, statewide, and national level can affect a school's ability to educate its students due to funding, state standards of student

performance, teacher-student ratio, etc. And, legislation has had its impact on BGHS as well. Due to the transient nature of the majority of its students and the resulting fluctuating numbers of student enrollment, testing performance, and "exceptional children" labels, BGHS cannot qualify as an alternative school in the eyes of the state of North Carolina and access the services a typical alternative school can.

In addition, the funding the school had received to implement the AKOM program, which helped to target specific learning difficulties and suggest specific teaching methods to meet specific student needs. However, the funding from the Duke Endowment Learning Initiative was no longer made available and the necessary follow through and support cannot be provided to give consistent aid to many of the students at BGHS.

Finally, unlike the governments in the United Kingdom and Australia, the United States currently has no nationwide push to meet the educational needs of its more than 375,000 students in out of home care. Major studies over the long term have been conducted by researchers like Sonja Jackson in the UK and the CREATE Foundation in Australia, however, there is no organized effort on the part of any group or foundation here in the US to make focused efforts towards the kind of augmentation and adaptation to academic curriculum necessary to ensure the academic success of all students who have been placed in out of home care. Until the time arrives when the needs of these hundreds of thousands of youths become important enough to address, they will continue to fall through the cracks and generate the bleak outcomes we have seen in the past.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY

Based on the findings outlined in the last chapter, it was found that students who have been placed in out of home care are successful when certain factors are present in their lives. These primary factors were: a supportive authority figure, the student's capacity for resilience, and a teacher's ability to adapt to student needs.

As the students in out of home care are relying on the educational systems in our country as one of the primary providers of care, much responsibility is placed on educators to meet their needs in an appropriate manner. If not, the consequences are as dismal as the statistics initially cited in this report about youths who age out of the foster care system:

- 46 percent had not completed high school,

- 51 percent were unemployed,

- 25 percent had been homeless for at least one night, and

- 40 percent had been on public assistance or incarcerated.

In order to avoid the bleak future of the past, educators, administrators, and specialists need to work together to bring about the needed changes to our school system – beginning in the classroom.

Implications for the Classroom

As the adult primarily responsible for the education of a classroom full of students, a teacher may or may not be aware of a student in his or her class that is living in out of home care; a student's living situation is typically not information that is readily shared with classroom teachers. Therefore, it is

necessary for educators to be able to adjust instruction and expectations when necessary.

Some of the students interviewed pointed out that they had a teacher who was concerned about their academic performance and took the time to ask why the student was having problems and what they could do to help. This concern and support on the teacher's part can make the difference between being invested in school or completely disaffected for the youth in out of home care.

Similarly, the authority figures involved in the lives of these youths (i.e. social workers, teaching parents, administrators) should view themselves as not simply involved in a youth's life, but actually invested in his or her education. This outside support, if carried into the classroom, can yield results such as those found with the students at BGHS.

This unique educational setting, and others like it at various children's homes across the nation, is prime to meet the special behavioral and academic needs of students in out of home care; in this case, BGHS implemented the TFM and AKOM programs to specifically address these issues. It is assumed that many programs like these exist, which could serve the purpose of teaching social skills and tailoring instruction in order to teach these students in the most effective manner. Specifically, because the data suggests that success is directly related to a student's belief in him or herself, these programs should certainly reinforce this confidence through praise and positive reinforcement of the abilities the student does possess.

This approach will not only help to improve educational settings for those youths who reside in group homes and/or attend schools with an alternative curriculum, but also those who attend public school in a traditional classroom if

the classroom teacher is sensitive to the needs of all of his or her students. The basic adaptations recommended can be applied in a general setting and will not only directly affect the likelihood of a student's success who has been placed in out of home care, but will also work to improve the overall classroom climate for all students in general.

Implications for the Curriculum Specialist

A Curriculum Specialist can fill the unique position of coaching others and helping them to understand how to teach their students effectively. Considering how an individual in this position can affect the needed changes in the classroom environment to best help students in out of home care, they must help teachers understand the concepts of resiliency and the application of a solution-focused approach, individualization of instruction through appropriate modifications, and a willingness to meet students where they are.

On a larger scale, developing a more consistent curriculum would be helpful for students transferring from one school to another so they would not find themselves as far behind in the coursework. In addition, continuing the trend of character education and expanding it to include a social skills curriculum from which all students could benefit: taught as a tandem curriculum to academics, skills could include problem solving and respect for others.

Best Practices

Based on both research and literature, it is imperative that classroom teachers and administrators alike must understand the essential nature of contextual awareness. As the concept of cultural awareness has taken hold and individuals

are more likely to be sensitive to one another's cultural differences and respect them, the context of an individual's life circumstances must be valued in like manner. In other words, as educators recognize and respect the individual student's situation in life, chances are the student will feel that support and work to achieve success in the classroom.

In addition, working to increase cross-agency cooperation such as those previously cited examples in both the United Kingdom and Australia would catapult efforts to aid youth in out-of-home care exponentially. As departments of social service, departments of education, and various child-placing agencies collaborate in the development of appropriate practices while working to meet basic student needs, those youths who have had their lives turned upside down would no longer slip through the cracks due to a gaps in communication, but they would be supported on all sides with a network of responsible adults involved in their lives.

Recommendations for Further Research

Following Sonja Jackson's decades of work and research in the field of education and social work with youths in public care, replicating her studies of those youths who have proven to be successful in school should be of utmost importance. As this type of study strives to discover the key to making a difference in the lives of these students, it should hold the answer to the question: What can be done to reverse the trend of our schools' failure to meet the needs of this ever-growing population?

Overall, what should be noted is that although these changes and improvements are being made to specifically apply to those students who have

been placed in out of home care, they have a much broader social implication. With an appropriate education, no longer will men and women who were raised in a living situation outside of their home be more likely to end up incarcerated or homeless than they are to be productive members of our society. Educators will have turned the tide from failure to success with a few considerations for this unique population of almost half a million of our nation's children.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions – Youths

1. Ethnicity
2. Gender
3. Age
4. Grade
5. Length of time in care? Current placement?
6. Did these changes in placement affect your performance in school? How?
7. Did you lose any credits or have to repeat any classes or material because of this/these move(s)?
8. How are your grades now? Usually?
9. Do you expect to graduate from high school? Go to college?
10. Who has helped you to do your best in school, if anyone?
11. How come you are successful in school? How do you do it?

Use Likert scale (1 to 5) to answer the following questions:
5 completely satisfied
4 somewhat satisfied
3 neither satisfied
2 somewhat satisfied
1 completely satisfied

12. How satisfied are you that you can keep up with the work done in your classes?
13. How satisfied are you with the way your teachers treat you?
14. How satisfied are you with your education?
15. How satisfied are you with the relationship you have with your teachers?
16. How satisfied are you with the relationship you have with your social worker?
17. How satisfied are you that you feel comfortable talking to your teachers about your educational needs?

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

18. Have you ever been suspended?
19. Have you ever been expelled?
20. Have you ever been in a fight at school?
21. Have you ever failed a class?
22. Have you ever failed a grade?
23. Have you ever skipped school?
24. Have you ever argued with a teacher?
25. Have you ever fought with a teacher?
26. Do you think teachers should know if kids are in group care or in foster care
27. What educational services do you think you need or are missing?
28. Would you like to say anything else about the appropriateness and quality of your education?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions – Social Worker

1. How long have you worked in the field of social work? Approximately how many youths have you worked with in that time?
2. How many of these youths completed high school? Went to college?
3. Do you remember one youth in particular who stands out to you as really being successful in school? What made the difference for him/her?
4. What are the typical educational needs of the youths you place in care?
5. What is your role, as a social worker, in the academic life of the youths in DSS custody? How does your role compare with that of the group home staff and the teachers at school?
6. What can help more of the youths in your caseload to succeed in school?
7. Do you feel knowledgeable about educational options and services available at the schools your clients attend?

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions – Educators

1. How long have you been teaching? What is your level of education?
2. In a given year, how many students do you have in your class who are placed in out of home care?
3. What is your role in these students' lives?
4. How often do you communicate with their (Teaching) Parents? With their Social Workers?
5. Is the parental contact more or less than with those of your other students?
6. What do you need to help these students achieve academically?
7. Is there one student who was placed in out of home care who was particularly successful? To what do you attribute his/her success?
8. What percentage of these students are accessing special education services?

Use Likert scale (1 to 5) to answer the following questions:
5 completely satisfied
4 somewhat satisfied
3 neither satisfied
2 somewhat satisfied
1 completely satisfied

9. How satisfied are you with the behavior of these students?
10. How satisfied are you with the level of involvement of the Teaching Parents?
11. How satisfied are you with the level of involvement of the social workers?
12. How satisfied are you with the completeness of the school records?
13. How satisfied are you with the level of understanding the Teaching Parents and social workers have about educational issues, options, and services that are available?
14. Do you think children who have been placed in out of home care should be identified?

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions – Teaching Parents
1. What do you see as your role in the education of the youths you serve? How does this role compare to those of the educators and social workers?
2. Do your youths have an IEP in place? Are they accessing any special education services? Do they have any learning difficulties?
3. What is the hardest struggle (academically) you've seen for your youths?
4. What do you need to help these youths succeed in school?
5. In your work with these youths, what is it that helps them to succeed in school? For those who are successful students, to what do you attribute their success?

Use Likert scale (1 to 5) to answer the following questions:
5 completely satisfied
4 somewhat satisfied
3 neither satisfied
2 somewhat satisfied
1 completely satisfied

6. How satisfied are you with the academic progress of the youths?
7. How satisfied are you that their academic needs are being met?
8. How satisfied are you with the working relationship you have with the youths' teachers?
9. How satisfied are you with the working relationship you have with the youths' social workers (in regards to education)?
10. How satisfied are you with your level of understanding about educational issues, options, and services that are available?
11. Do you think children who have been placed in out of home care should be identified?
12. In your opinion, who should be the person in charge of making sure youths residing in group homes get what they need educationally?

Interview Questions & Notes - Youth Summary

Ethnicity **NA, AA, AA, AA, C**

Gender **3-M, 2-F**

Age – all 18

Grade **HS graduate, HS graduate, HS graduate, 12th, 11th**

Length of time in care **3 years, 1 week in foster care the rest here; 11 months; 18 months; 7 years- kinship, foster, group home, therapeutic foster, now Group care; 1yr & 9 mo, group care, 7 or 8 years in foster care (5 placements)**

Current placement **ILP; group home; ILP; ILP; ILP**

Changes affect performance in school / how? **No; no; not really, it's about the same- my study habits changed; Some improved them and others caused them to go down drastically; no**

Lose any credits/have to repeat classes due to moves? **No; yes, I lost a credit in Early Childhood because they didn't offer it at East Columbus; I got better because in Lumberton I couldn't pass math, here I did; yes. Both because of moving and behavior. Failed 5 credits, also had to repeat classes (biology, algebra, English, etc.) missed lots in school; no**

Current grades? **Alright, in high school I passed everything; A's & B's; worst grade in pre-cal, other grades a's and b's; A lot better- they improved since the 1st semester; a's and b's**

Usually? **1st they weren't as good, then they went up; C's & D's; about the same, better in English than in math; b's and c's usually; Pretty much until sr. year, until parent-child development class**

Expect to graduate? **Yes- graduated in Dec.; yes; already graduated; yes; yes**

Go to college? **Art & Design College in Savannah; yes; A&T, been accepted, start this summer; yes; Job corps and then do college after that (need some time off 1st)**

Who helped you in school?
1) **A teacher, she was my science teacher and I slept in there but passed my test, then she asked me why I slept when I could be doing work. I kept sleeping for a while and then didn't. She would always check my report cards to make sure I was doing good**

2) **My teaching parents, my peers, and myself. They helped me by having us do study hour, motivating me, and cheering me on when I do good.**
3) **Here, my tp's, at home my mom and sisters, other residents do as well**
4) **Becky Wray (bgh administrator / counselor), my social worker and her boss (knew her for 6 years), my grandparents. People like them have helped me stay in school, otherwise I would have quit. They made me realize that without my education there would be nothing for me to do.**
5) **My uncles**

Why are you successful? **I'm not a quitter, period. I just can't quit; Because I tried my best and told myself I can do it; It's not that hard as long as you try, mostly I do homework in my room at a desk; I think about all the people always put me down and say I'm never make something out of myself. I take that and reverse it and make myself work harder; Focus on my bookwork, get homework done, don't watch tv, I straightened up and focused**

What educational services do you think you need or are missing? **No, the things I didn't do was just me being lazy; none; I needed tutoring (esp for calculus); tutoring; tutoring**

Would you like to say anything else about the appropriateness and quality of your education? **No; no; I think it would be nice if the group home had a tutoring service available for residents; I plan to extend it as far as I can; no**

29. How satisfied are you that you can keep up with the work done in your classes? **5, 5, 4, 4, 5, I was organized and had things in on time**
30. How satisfied are you with the way your teachers treat you? **5, 5, 5, 4, 4, sometimes they treat you good unless they're having a bad day and treat everyone in the class that way**
31. How satisfied are you with your education? **I wish I would've done better, 3, 4, 5, 2, I think I could do better if I can stay stable, 5**
32. How satisfied are you with the relationship you have with your teachers? **5, 4, 5, 4, but then sometimes they get on my nerves because some of them have felt sorry for me. I don't need anyone's pity, 5, not with everything, but nothing to complain about, they've all been nice to me**
33. How satisfied are you with the relationship you have with your social worker? **They kept changing, the one I had for a little while would be a 5, n/a, 4, 5, I had a great relationship with my social worker. I probably wouldn't be living without her. I've had her for about 2 years now, I've been through a lot of them before that, 2, I've asked for things, she never calls me back, try to ask for home visits, etc. call and call and she never calls me back. She'll call (another resident) but not me**
34. How satisfied are you that you feel comfortable talking to your teachers about your educational needs? **5, 5, 4-I usually don't say anything, 4, some you can,**

some you can't, 5, I don't need help from them. If I need help, I'll ask my teaching parent

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

35. Have you ever been suspended? **Yes, fighting, didn't tuck my shirt in (repeatedly); yes; yes, in 10th grade for fighting; yes; yes - Once in elementary school for fighting, boys tried to push me around**
36. Have you ever been expelled? **No, no, no, no, no**
37. Have you ever been in a fight at school? **Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes**
38. Have you ever failed a class? **Yes, yes, yes, yes, no**
39. Have you ever failed a grade? **Yes, 9th , yes, no, yes, no**
40. Have you ever skipped school? **No, no, no, no, no**
41. Have you ever argued with a teacher? **Yes, yes, no, yes, yes – in middle school**
42. Have you ever fought with a teacher? **No, no, no, No, not physically. In 2nd grade I tripped a teacher and pushed her down, no**
43. Do you think teachers should know if kids are in group care or in foster care?
    a. **No, I'm the same as everybody else so it shouldn't make a difference;**
    b. **yes, because it helps us be better students they will try to help us with anything;**
    c. **no, it shouldn't matter;**
    d. **Yes and no. yes, because some kids have a disadvantage from all the moving and stuff. No because some teachers have pity on them or like to gossip with other teachers and then classmates find out and that's embarrassing. I think they should know for educational purposes, but no details.**
    e. **Yes, it would help with deailing with us. Mr. _____ from East Columbus is picky with kids from boys home… we get sent home and the kids with moms and dads get iss.**

** last youth to respond on vocational track with adjusted curriculum of study

Interview Questions & Notes – Social Worker Summary

8. How long have you worked in the field of social work? Approximately how many youths have you worked with in that time?

In social work total 8 ½ years, 300 or 400

11 years, 100

16 years' experience, approximately 700 kids total

I have worked in the field of social work for 12 years. I have worked with over 1000 children.

9. How many of these youths completed high school? Went to college?

Very few – less than 10. (worker worked with younger kids). No college, but went into military, he married another foster child – they met at Falcon Children's Home. They had a baby also. He's the only one I can really think of that's really done something. When they turn 18, they go right back to that same home, even if they were removed from it.

n/a – all under 18

60% complete high school, don't know if any went to college

no answer on high school, 25% have attended college

10. Do you remember one youth in particular who stands out to you as really being successful in school? What made the difference for him/her?

Probably him – there was another youth in the 9th grade and he was doing really well in school. He was really smart. When we removed him from the home, he ran from me, but we placed him in a good home. He was a good kid. Most of the kids we serve have ADHD or ODD – there's always something… The one that went in the military was good foster parents that made a difference. I don't really know about the other one. He had always lived with his grandma and his mom on the streets was a heroin addict. He was naturally smart. He was actually placed with the same foster parents. They did d a great job breaking down the ki's' walls and getting to them.

14 year old, always made straight a's and ready to go to high school n ext year. She is an exceptional child—artistic, good with her hands, she is kind of isolated from other peers. She has always isolated herself. She has a drive inside of her that makes

her want to be the very best of everyone at everything she does. She has nothing in her conrner; she has never seen her mom in 3 years, family been split apart, never will go home. Wants to be s doctor. She has a will to succeed and wants to be successful.

Yes – the support of the foster parents (i.e. going to the school, talking to the teachers, being at meetings, if they saw something wrong with the kid then going to the school). Sometimes when teachers know the kids are in foster care, their expectations aren't as high as if the child is someone's birth child.

The one difference in the youth's success was the consistent structure provided at home. The necessary one-on-one time, tutoring, collaboration with the teacher, and positive reinforcement and encouragement from everyone in the youth's support system.

11. What are the typical educational needs of the youths you place in care?

ADHD, ODD.
When they come into care, they are already behind and we're told they would benefit from tutoring or to Sylvan – if there was money for the $42 an hour that would really help for the additional services to bring them up to grade level. Despite getting them into a good home, they are already so far behind.

A lot of the kids need extra help, one on one, and help in the classroom. Also, tutoring outside of the classroom. Education has been a back seat to everything else, to survival. Education year after year has been something that has not been important. Then they get into a safe environment and then they can work on it. Now they are expected to keep up and some of them need to be held back a grade and now they just don't do that. They are usually two or three grade levels behind. They need more attention than the average student. Any student who comes into a care for abuse and neglect will need more attention than a teacher can really give them.

These kids have been moved from place to place and need stablility and need to start all over. One school may have been working very closely with them, but another won't. If a kid is from New Hanover County and can go to an after school program there and then moves to a more rural location they might not have their services. I have a kid now from NHC who now lives in Bolton, he was previously identified to get extra help and now the school says it's the responsibility of the foster parent and has to do the best he can.

The typical educational needs of the youths placed in care is literacy skills.

12. What is your role, as a social worker, in the academic life of the youths in DSS custody? How does your role compare with that of the group home staff and the teachers at school?

Kids we had custody of we met with the teachers for IEP meetings or when they had problems in school. The teachers would often talk above the parents' levels of comprehension. We would break it down for them and explain how they could help. Now I'm not as involved with the school because I try to get the foster parents more involved so the teacher will be more invested in the child. If the teacher doesn't think anybody cares, then they don't.

I see my role as being advocates for the children and make sure they don't slip through the cracks. When they're really bottoming out, we can stand up for them and go into the history about why they act the way they do. The foster parents do this as well, but I do this in an official way to advocate for them. I go to support the foster parents to make sure the school hears them. I will write letters requesting testing, etc. I've got one boy who has been mislabeled for 6 years of his life. He's now 17 years old and has lived with this wrong label. Now, two years after we first requested the retesting, he now has it. I was dealing with the other things that he needed at home. Advocating for finances so he can get what he needs like sylvan tutoring.

My role is to help a foster parent see past the kid is not doing well in school and then seeing that there is a reason for it and get them the help they need. Encouraging htem to talk to the principal, the teacher, the guidance counselor, etc. and then seeing where they can get help. You would hope the teacher automatically see that the youth needs the help – most of htem don't and see them as transient and don't have that commitment to them and have that thought that they won't be there that long. Academically, the foster parent's role is to stay on top of the teacher and don't just ignore the problem and expect the teacher to do it – stand up for them and demand to know why they aren't doing well.

N/A – I currently work in a group home.

13. What can help more of the youths in your caseload to succeed in school?

Tutoring would be a big thing. Kids under 3 automatically get evaluated, but those that are school aged, I'd like to see them evaluated and extra services put into place for them. Very few schools have extra help and resources unless they have an IEP or a 504.

Teachers have too many demands on them. Teachers need to be able to make their own decisions about how to teach children. It's hard to see that the governor or the president can tell them what to teach. With no child left behind and the eog are things they have to do because their job depends upon it. They can't take the time with the kids that need it.

If there was one thing to help the kids do better in school it would be access to services like tutoring.

Stability, appropriate evaluations, communication with teachers, tutoring if necessary, small classroom sizes for many students, a larger curriculum to motivate/stimulate the students, tests that are non-biased

14. Do you feel knowledgeable about educational options and services available at the schools your clients attend?

Yes

No I don't. I can remember going to my first iep meeting and not knowing what that was. It was definitely on the job experience that helped me learn. I feel more knowledgable than I did before. I remember that first iep meeting and you just sign it because you're told to. Once a principal had me sign a blank iep with nothing but the kid's name on it and that he'd fax it to me later. Now I'd never let that happen.

The general stuff like having the kid tested or might ask if testing has been done, but as far as … I can go in there and say the right thing at an IEP meeting for example, but don't' really know as much as I should about it.

Yes, however, it would be difficult for a parent without a support base to access many of these services or even know their rights to have services provided.

Interview Questions & Notes – Educator Summary

    15. How long have you been teaching?
5 years, 4 years, 23 years, 16 years, **I have either been a teacher, assistant Principal, or Princial for 25 years**

    16. What is your level of education?
BA, BA – sociology and K-6 certification, BA, MA (Ed), **Masters' Degree in Administration**

    17. In a given year, how many students do you have in your class who are placed in out of home care?
All: maybe 15-30; 100% [5-10]; Usually 23-35; 24 +/-; **It varies. Minimum of 1 to 2 and maximum of 5 to 8 would probably be a good estimate.**

    18. What is your role in these students' lives?

        a. Teacher: academic and behavioral correction, guidance and support
        b. to educate, to reinforce positive social skills, to build confidence
        c. To educate them, to build character in them, to love and nurture them, To be a good role model
        d. A teacher of reading, writing/grammar (grades 6-8) and social studies 5th and 8th grades; establish a warm and caring classroom environment, show interest and concern for them as individuals, I am there to help them learn so that they will be successful and become productive citizens in society
        e. **As and educator and administrator, I try to help students gain or improve upon their self-worth. I want them to learn and enjoy the process of learning. I try to instill traits of character education and give them guidance and instruction in areas of behavior and academics.**

    19. How often do you communicate with their (Teaching) Parents? With their Social Workers?

Difficult to say as I have been here for only a few weeks. After 4-5 weeks, I have had 4-5 conversations with teaching parents and no conversations with social workers.

Teaching parent
- Daily with homework sheet and point cards (behavior)
- by phone 1/week
social workers – rare occasions

TP – quite frequently if needed – once every week or 2 weeks?
Social workers – not that often
Off campus social workers – rarely, if ever. They are in and out and do not ask to speak to us.

I communicate often with the teaching parents but seldom with the social workers

TPs: **Almost daily and sometimes more than once during the day. Naturally, I don't see or talk to each one every day, but the opportunity is always available. They are extremely important to the students because they follow up on homework and behavior at school.**
SW: **Communication with social workers differ. Some, I see often and others I rarely see at all. They are always welcome at the school at any time. If I am having academic or behavioral concerns, most social workers will respond almost immediately to assist.**

20. Is the parental contact more or less than with those of your other students?
N/A, n/a, Probably more than at a regular school with students who go home, all of my students are in out of home care, **More contact from teaching parents and contact is much more positive. Teaching parents and school staff work extremely well together.**

21. What do you need to help these students achieve academically?
- Support of educational program from home
- Students who have adequate sleep, food, and stability to be able to focus on academic goals while at school
- student willingness to achieve and learn
- variety of teaching resources
- patience
- A good rapport with the student
- A willingness to learn (by student)
- One on one time and/or individualized instruction
- A knowledge of where that child is, academically
- Patience
- A variety of teaching strategies

Most of our financial needs are either met by the school system or Boys & Girls Homes. We have testing programs that allow us to quickly indicate what levels studens are performing at, strengths and weaknesses.

22. Is there one student who was placed in out of home care who was particularly successful? To what do you attribute his/her success?
    a. The personal attention she receives; attention to her specific needs. Support in establishing a pattern of success and recognition of that success.
    b. No answer
    c. A willingness to come to tutoring or to learn; consistently coming to class and trying to learn; watching himself improve and get the help he needed; a pride in his work/improvement
    d. His success involved the following: being accountable for his own learning, staying motivated, being persistent, having a desire to achieve, putting forth needed effort, having success be the ultimate goal, and having dedicated and caring teachers
    e. **We had an 8th grade student placed in home care this past spring. Foster parent tells me he is doing great and we are very pleased to hear this assessment. Success attributed to Good foster parents and a climate where the student feels he does not have to impress his peers.**

23. What percentage of these students are accessing special education services?
5 out of 13, about 38%; Between 30-40%; usually about 25%; no answer given; **Only about 20% are in our special education programs because they do not qualify according to testing standards.**

24. Do you think children who have been placed in out of home care should be identified to teachers and staff?
Yes; Only if problems arise in the classroom and it would be beneficial for the teacher to know; Yes- it helps you understand them better and sometimes I feel like these students need more positive feedback and encouragement than the others & No- they do not want to be singled out or treated any differently because of it; Yes, because it will help to know how to better address their needs; **Yes, the more information the better. All Kinds of Minds program is a great resource for us.**

Use Likert scale (1 to 5) to answer the following questions:
5 completely satisfied
4 somewhat satisfied
3 neither satisfied
2 somewhat satisfied
1 completely satisfied

25. How satisfied are you with the behavior of these students?
3, 4, 4, 4, **4-behavior is individual, and I might rate higher or lower according to the actions of a particular child**

26. How satisfied are you with the level of involvement of the Teaching Parents?
Inconsistent – too many tardies, incomplete or missing homework, lack of preparation for school. I have had two visits with teaching parents that have been excellent. One teaching parent visited my class for the entire period and fully participated. Great! I do not feel able to address this question because I have had very little experience here at BGHS. But, based on experience so far, I will provide my impression., 4, 4, 4, **5-very satisfied!**

27. How satisfied are you with the level of involvement of the social workers?
N/A, 3, 2, 3, **4-again, according to which social worker is involved or not involved**

28. How satisfied are you with the completeness of the school records?
5, 1, 3, 4, **4-for the most part, however, we do get some children with almost no records**

29. How satisfied are you with the level of understanding the Teaching Parents and social workers have about educational issues, options, and services that are available?
No experience, 4, 4-tps & 3-soc wkrs, 4, **4-overall, satisfied. Educational issues change quickly for all of us**

Interview Questions & Notes – Teaching Parents Summary

13. What do you see as your role in the education of the youths you serve? How does this role compare to those of the educators and social workers?

As far as academic, my role is to encourage them, get them any help they need, listen to their moans and groans. If they're having a problem in biology, then listen to them. Teachers don't always have the time, but I do to support them. If they have tutoring everyday, why are you here watching tv? More of an encourager, staying on them about their homework. They don't have a set study hour here in this program, if I get a phone call that hw isn't getting done, I hold them accountable. The educators' roles (at east Columbus) they put the work out there and expect it to be done. If someone isn't doing the work, they'll let us know through email or whatever. We're teaching them they have to teach themselves. They won't handhold you and walk you through, not at this age. They need to get the work done. The social workers' role is to call me and check in and see if they're going to school and passing their classes. The ones I've been dealing with have had a passive role with their education. They may ask me if someone is failing and ask what I've done to help them succeed. Some of them have been visiting with kids at the schools without letting us know what's going on, but then the youth will stop by and tell me.

The teaching parents are the first teacher that the child comes in contact with. The teaching parent has more of a personal role in that the teaching parent actually lives with the child.

I see my role in the education of the youths I serve as a protector, role model, caregiver, and listener. All of these roles compare to the educators and social workers because we all have these responsibilities. My role is only different because I am more hands-on with the youth and I spend more time around the youth as well.

Rather like a "squeaky wheel"… We are always teaching the youths that they "can be successful"… An encourager, letting the youths see us visiting the school very regularly and speaking to the teachers, helping the teachers understand each youth, and how to get the most out of each one, working together with the teachers we can "nip behavioral issues in the bud," help to get the youths through their tests and exams. Social workers usually leave this area to us.

Encourage homework and studying for exams, promote further education as a way to change their lives for the better. We do this over, and over, and over again. This is their chance to get back at the world for what has been done to them or not done for them., We cheer them on and are excited by seeing their

accomplishments. I never wanted managerial work because I would lose out on this great opportunity.

14. Do your youths have an IEP in place?

Just one (of 8), _____ and _____ should have had one – he's 18 in the 9ᵗʰ grade. Had he received services earlier, he would have been in a proper place (he's failing everything and we're losing him because he's in a regular and not a vocal program – now he's 18 and going to live with his cousin who will home school him and we've lost him)

No

At this time, none of our youths have an IEP in place.

We have had some youths who we found necessary to have them classified in order for them to be successful.

The old one does and we make sure they have one if necessary.

Are they accessing any special education services?

Vocational program or IEP

No

We have two residents that are currently accessing special education classes in regular school (slow learning).

No answer

No answer

Do they have any learning difficulties?

All of them have some difficulties, now education is important to them where it hasn't been before and they don't know what to do. One of them labeled (don't know what it is), mild MR. Another one decided to stay in HS, not go to adult HS or GED

Yes

The do have learning difficulties which require a lot of patience and positive praise.

No answer

No answer

15. What is the hardest struggle (academically) you've seen for your youths?

Getting their study habits (there are none), they're up at night studying or play station 2. Science and math have been hard. Believe it or not, English has no problem (even with the kids from Robeson county / Lumberton vernacular).

The children in my care have not been taught the simple basics of reading and writing.

I think the hardest struggle (academically) I have seen for my youth was accessing a slow learner. I have had residents to complete study hour and still need an extra hour because he was a slow learner. Because this youth had this struggle, he became frustrated very easily and often refused to complete homework as well as school work that was given to him.

The amount of school missed for various reasons causes the youths problems understanding the present information being taught (e.g. in math). Mindset… being told they would never amount to anything and be unable to graduate anyway "so what's the point in trying."

Loss of time in school before they came into care. Therefore they have large holes in their education. Families who put them down and tell them not to bother because it didn't matter.

16. What do you need to help these youths succeed in school?

When we ask for the right calculators for algebra, geometry, calculus classes; also, if they're coming from the middle school for the assessments to be done so they're in place for high school. Had Lee been prepared from the school and from _____ cottage, we wouldn't have had to be putting fires out instead of being preemptive. Need tutors as well – it's been a long time since I've been in school and doing high school math. We need people who are really up to speed on the sciences. We need some mentors that aren't too much older than the youths. College students to show them that you need good study habits. We need to be taken seriously when we say we need things like bookbags – not ones that you would give a 5th grader.

More family involvement and mentors.

I need more help from other positive providers in these youths' lives (example: social worker, parents, consultants, mentors, and preachers) to help[motivate and show youths how important it is to succeed in school.

Encouraging the youths to encourage each other. Positive peer pressure, peer tutoring, if necessary. Continuous warm fuzzies, especially when the marks are below A's. Finding something positive to say to encourage them to face another day… Have tutoring available through school, boys' home, or sylvan. Links money sometimes available to help the youth catch up – continuously tell them they can make it.

Tutoring (money for sylvan), a cheering squad like us

17. In your work with these youths, what is it that helps them to succeed in school? For those who are successful students, to what do you attribute their success?

A lot of positive praise. In the last few days during finals, I can encourage them that they can do their best if they've studied and prepared. A lot of encouragement and positive praise. If they have finals, reminding them to study. Also, have them take responsibility for their actions. If they're out smoking a cigarette instead of going to class, then they need to accept that.

The consistency in the cottage. A willingness to learn, and a strong motivation.

My patience helps these youths succeed in school. Also, teaching the youth to never give up before you try helps youths succeed in school. For thos who are successful students, I attribute to their success with positive praise and encouragement to continue doing well. For example, I have a resident who always makes great grades in school. Just because his grades are good, I still stay strong with the positive praise to let him know that I do notice that he is still doing well and that I encourage him to continue.

The knowledge that boys and girls homes will pay for the whole of their education at school/college and the fact that they are usually the first one in the family to be able to go to college. (The first one to gradueate HS in some instances). The knowledge that they are able to be successful and not have to follow the mold that they have been taught and they can make a difference in their lives and their families to focus and carry on against all odds.

The promise of being given the money for higher education by boys' home is the #1. It helps them here where they are monitored and congratulated for their ability to overcome huge obstacles. The chance to have a better life that what they grew up with. If you can sink this into them, they will push themselves to be

successful. A positive peer culture where everyone is working to obtain their individual goals.

Use Likert scale (1 to 5) to answer the following questions:
5 completely satisfied
4 somewhat satisfied
3 neither satisfied
2 somewhat satisfied
1 completely satisfied

18. How satisfied are you with the academic progress of the youths? **4, 4, 4, 5, 5**
19. How satisfied are you that their academic needs are being met? **3, 4, 4, 4, 3 (work is dumbed down)**
20. How satisfied are you with the working relationship you have with the youths' teachers? **4, 4, 4, 5, 5**
21. How satisfied are you with the working relationship you have with the youths' social workers (in regards to education)? **3, 4, 4, 4, 4**
22. How satisfied are you with your level of understanding about educational issues, options, and services that are available? **5, 5, 2, 5 (learning more each day), 5**

23. Do you think children who have been placed in out of home care should be identified?

No, if you single them out, there is nothing worse than singling out a kid at this age. That's happened at East Columbus. They need to be part of the crowd. It's been either bgh against Bolton, or against any other part of the community. It's a bad rap.

Yes, I believe that the child should be identified to the teacher and school because the child may have special needs that the school and teachers are not aware of.

I don't think that children who have been palced in and out of home care should be identified to a teacher/school because some teachers may only view and see the child as being labeled.

Yes, I have found that teachers are more understanding to some of the youths' shortcomings and have been more sympathetic and helpful to them in order to make sure they succeed.

Yes – it helps them to have some understanding of what challenges the kids have.

24. In your opinion, who should be the person in charge of making sure youths residing in group homes get what they need educationally?

They need a position for it, they need an educational director position period that takes charge of it. Someone who can work with the middle school, the high school, the county, and are familiar with what's available.

The social workers, consultants
In my opinion, I feel that the person are agent who place the youth in the group home should be responsible for making sure the youth gets what he needs.

Teaching parents, consultants, social workers, teachers and guidance counselors. Also state-mandated law to back us up.

TP's and their consultants with a push for the social workers., But, we must have the state rules behind us to insist on needs being met.