



COMPASSIONATE SYSTEMS:

Monterey Program

PROGRESS REPORT

Acknowledgments

We are in deep gratitude to all of our collaborators and thought partners in Monterey County:

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

Monterey County Office of Education

Community Human Services

Salinas Unified School District

Pivot Learning

Coalition of Homeless Services Providers

EpiCenter

**Monterey County Department
of Social Services**

Seaside Youth Resource Center

In deep appreciation,
The Compassionate Systems Team at
the National Center for Youth Law

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Letter from National Center for Youth Law | 3 |
| Compassionate Systems Framework | 4 |
| A Growing Crisis in California | 4 |
| MPUSD & NCYL- A Shared Commitment to Young People | 5 |
| How are NCYL Program Participants Doing Academically? | 8 |
| Social Emotional Wellbeing and Youth Experience Surveys | 12 |
| Student Success Stories | 13 |
| Local Partnership to Improve Barriers to Educational Engagement | 14 |
| Stronger Together, We Are Making Progress | 15 |

Letter from National Center for Youth Law

We, at the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL), envision a future where each and every system-impacted young person is able to graduate from high school with the widest array of possibilities for their future. Whether they choose to attend a university, pursue vocational training, or open a business, youth who have experienced houselessness or homelessness deserve to achieve high school diplomas and create the futures they envision for themselves, with the support of a network of adults who are cheering them on along the way.

Our work in Monterey County is anchored in a proud partnership with Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD). We have partnered closely with the district's Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS) team to support students experiencing houselessness or homelessness and identified through the districts' McKinney-Vento Homeless Youth program. MPUSD in partnership with NCYL and Pivot Learning Partners came together to design educational interventions that support students with the highest needs. This collaboration incorporates all aspects of the NCYL Compassionate Systems Framework which seeks to create conditions by which young people are seen, heard, and encouraged, while experiencing adults as allies and supporters. **We have joined in solidarity with a growing movement across the country to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for every single young person;** partnering to create a future where leaders from education, community-based organizations and public agencies join together with a sense of commitment and persistence to build the conditions under which:

- > **Young people** are engaged in learning, empowered to create futures they are excited about, and have champions in their corner for the long run.
- > **Parents and family members** are thoughtfully engaged and meaningfully supported.
- > **System and community leaders** deeply collaborate on a shared vision that systematically amplifies the voices of young people and helps realize equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students.
- > **Professionals** working directly with young people in support of their education are appreciated, supported, and connected with one another.

In this report, we provide a detailed overview of our program model, the status of homelessness in Monterey County, and the impact of homelessness on educational engagement. Furthermore, we analyze educational data for students served, highlight key improvements in educational provisions within MPUSD, and share our collaborative vision for future work. **We feel deep gratitude for the leadership and partnership with MPUSD** on this program and look forward to continuing our pursuit to improve educational outcomes for students experiencing houselessness/homelessness.

In gratitude and solidarity,
NCYL

A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE to the Youth we serve

Each of you has taught us something new, and the lessons we learned allowed us to make progress by changing lives and systems not just in Monterey County, but across the entire state. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your lives. We are endlessly grateful for your presence and all you have added to our lives. Each of you have accomplished so much and while we are glad to walk along with you for that journey, the hard work and perseverance is yours, and it is truly inspiring to watch as you move to your future with your heads held high. We can't wait to see where you go next!

Program Achievements During 2018/2019:

Our team partnered closely with MPUSD, youth and families and we are excited about the progress we are making. Highlights of our achievements include the following:

41

Young people received intensive education advocacy, and connections to necessary resources like shelter, while we simultaneously worked with them to develop goals and plans for their future.

20

Of the 22 high school seniors served by NCYL Education Liaisons, **20 graduated** and have gone on to enroll in post-secondary institutions such as Monterey Peninsula College, Parsons School of Design in New York, UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University.

80

Students identified and **completed 80 goals** in areas focused on improving educational attendance or grades, completing critical post-secondary transition paperwork such as FAFSA and college applications, and accessed critical benefits like MediCal, SNAP or emergency housing.

NCYL Monterey created and distributed strategies for improving the engagement and educational success of this population, including a community resource guide, a transition checklist for graduating seniors, a notification letter for families eligible for McKinney-Vento homeless services, and, a presentation for school staff on best practices for working with students experiencing homelessness.



A Growing Crisis in California

California has more students experiencing homelessness than any other state. According to the National

Center for Homeless Education, of the 1.3 million students experiencing homelessness in the United States, nearly

18 percent are in California.¹ These students are protected under the

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a federal law that defines student homelessness as any living arrangement that is not fixed, regular and adequate.

In Monterey County, over 10 percent of students fall under this definition. Twelve schools in Monterey County see 20 percent or more of their students experiencing homelessness. In Monterey

Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) alone, almost 1,000 students were identified as homeless in the 2018-2019 school year, and in the 2019-2020 school year, that number rose to over 1,700 students.²



Compassionate Systems Framework *(formerly FosterEd)*

The Compassionate Systems framework is comprised of multiple state and regional collective impact campaigns, partnering with deeply invested teams of state and local leaders, students, and families to build goodwill and measured progress toward a shared vision for improving the educational conditions and opportunities for this incredible group of young people. We have led and supported work in four states and currently have seven active demonstration sites across California and Arizona. Our efforts are implemented within a distributed leadership structure that seeks to orient strategic and day to day decision making locally, by following the lead of the youth and families we serve. As such, each of our demonstration sites differ from one another, but are unified by the execution of three compassionate principles:

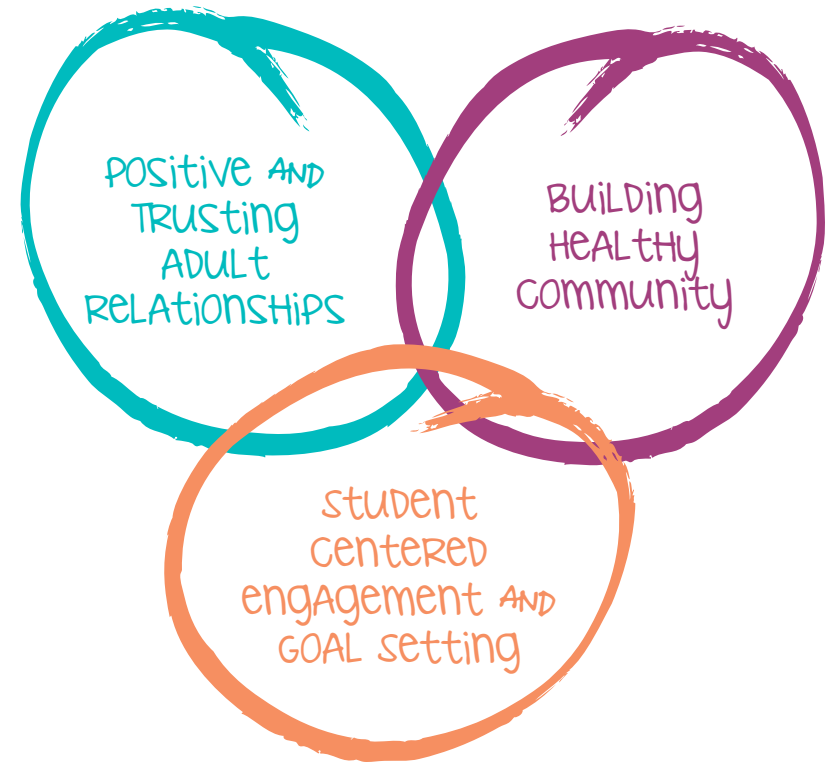
- > **Youth Voice and Choice.** This practice relentlessly encourages youth assets, contributions and perspectives. Building youth capacity to be strong self-advocates is crucial to their success. One of the most significant and complex problems we work to address is the pervasive lack of presence of youth voice to inform, drive, and influence partnership, decisions and action.
- > **Healing Centered Practice.** A healing centered approach views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively.
- > **Systems Thinking & Sensing.** Approaching problem solving by working from deeper layers of the trauma iceberg and addressing fundamental solutions hand-in-hand with symptomatic supports.

MPUSD & NCYL - A Shared Commitment to Young People

In collaboration with MPUSD, our demonstration site launched in July 2018. MPUSD envisions a school system that serves **ALL** students well, and engages each student in deep learning that prepares them to solve the challenges of the 21st century. This vision takes hard work, commitment, and a focus on continuous improvement. MPUSD is built on a solid foundation of effective instruction, positive school culture, systems of supports, and collaborative leadership. We are building innovative schools that offer dynamic learning opportunities to all students. While our programs will evolve over time, our focus remains steadfast on increasing student achievement and eliminating performance gaps. MPUSD stretches from the city of Marina to the north to the city of Monterey to the south, and encompasses the communities of Del Rey Oaks, Marina, Monterey, Sand City and Seaside. MPUSD is home to over 10,000 students, including 66 percent who are low income, 24 percent English language learners, 11 percent military and 10 percent who receive special education services.³

NCYL's Monterey program supports students who are identified as houseless or homeless through the McKinney-Vento program. Two Education Liaisons are co-located within the three comprehensive and one alternative high school sites within the district. The Education Liaisons partner directly with students to support them in strengthening their connection to school, and in improving academic, social and emotional outcomes. Our staff use the principles of positive youth development to build strong connections and meet students where they are. Our work is student-centered and strengths-based, and the aim is to increase each young person's self-efficacy and self-confidence in achieving their goals.

However, due to the transitional and often unpredictable nature of our young people's lives and living situations, as well as their lack of connection to local systems, the work we do in Monterey County has evolved from academic case management to whole-student support and care. Many of our young people have significant, immediate barriers to

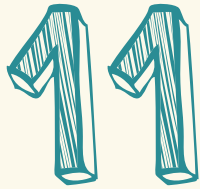


succeeding in school, such as housing, food instability and health, that must be addressed before we can truly begin working on their academic achievement and future goals. Due to this, our direct service work in Monterey County includes:

- > **individualized educational planning** including support with connecting to campus-based resources such as transportation, credit recovery, educational assessments and goal setting;
- > **career and post-secondary planning** including skill assessment and exploration, college exploration and application completion; and,
- > **highly relational individual engagement** with youth, connecting them with community-based resources such as immigration support, public assistance, health care, housing, and food and clothing resources.

Students Served 2018/2019 School Year

NCYL utilizes an online case management tool, EdTeamConnect (ETC) for case management and data tracking within our programs. As part of our Memorandum of Understanding with MPUSD, NCYL seeks consent from parents or guardians to provide services to students, access educational records and share information with third party evaluators. The following data, was gathered by Education Liaisons and stored within ETC.



Students enrolled in our program are unaccompanied minors (not living with their biological parents or guardians) and 30 students were living with their parents.



Students moved into independent study programs during their time in the program.

Living Situations of McKinney-Vento Students at MPUSD High School Sites⁴

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Apartment Complex | 1% |
| Hotel/Motel | 3% |
| Housing Program | 1% |
| Moving place to place | 1% |
| Multiple families in one dwelling | 72% |
| Single Family Dwelling | 10% |
| Shelter | 3% |
| Trailer | 7% |
| Unaccompanied Minor | 1% |

| Gender | Student enrolled in NYCL Program ⁵ | Students at MPUSD High School Sites ⁶ |
|--------------|---|--|
| Female | 15 | 254 |
| Male | 26 | 202 |
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 41 | 456 |

| Ethnicity | Student enrolled in NYCL Program ⁵ | Students at MPUSD High School Sites ⁶ |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Asian | 0 | 30 |
| Black, African American | 3 | 25 |
| Latino, Chicano, Hispanic | 23 | 347 |
| Multiracial | 4 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 0 |
| Unknown | 1 | 0 |
| White | 5 | 43 |
| Masked* | 4 | 0 |
| Total | 41 | 456 |

*These students indicated an ethnicity but due to low sizes in their subgroups, their ethnicity has been masked to preserve confidentiality

| School Type ⁷ | Student enrolled in NYCL Program ⁵ | Students at MPUSD High School Sites ⁶ |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Alternative School | 14 | 43 |
| Comprehensive High School | 28 | 413 |
| Independent Study | 2 | 0 |

Student Goals During the 2018/2019 School Year

Goal setting is a core function of the program, it encourages students to take charge of their academic careers, and supports future orientation towards success. Our students set goals across three domains: Academic, Social Capital, and Social Development. Goals included:

- > improving attendance, grades and high school graduation;
- > participating in extracurricular activities and finding employment;
- > developing or strengthening relationships at school and in the community;
- > applying to college or vocational programs and completing financial aid and scholarship applications; and,
- > connecting with community-based resources such as food, housing or health care.

| Goal Status ⁸ | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Completed | 80 |
| Academic | 56 |
| Social Capital | 11 |
| Social Development | 13 |
| Current | 9 |
| Academic | 3 |
| Social Capital | 3 |
| Social Development | 3 |
| Not Applicable | 6 |
| Academic | 1 |
| Social Capital | 3 |
| Social Development | 2 |
| Unmet | 3 |
| Academic | 3 |
| Social Capital | 0 |
| Total | 98 |

NUMBER OF GOALS set in 2018/2019 SY By type



ACADEMIC 63
 Academics – Engagement 41
 Post-Secondary:
 College & Career - Engagement 22



SOCIAL CAPITAL 17
 Connection to Services – Engagement 13
 Relationships with Adults – Engagement 4



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT 18
 Extracurriculars – Engagement 2
 Self-efficacy/Agency – Engagement 16

TOTAL 98

How are NCYL Program Participants Doing Academically?

NCYL partnered with Educational Results Partnerships (ERP) to analyze academic data of program participants during the 2018-2019 school year. ERP is a non-profit organization that applies data science and predictive analytics to identify successful public education systems, practices, programs, and policies that deliver the best results for students. ERP used data from member institutions of the Cal-PASS Plus system, a statewide clearinghouse of longitudinal data following students from K-12 into the workforce. This report utilized 2018-2019 student data to gain insights about the educational outcomes for students involved with the Compassionate Systems' Monterey Program in local school districts. Additionally, this report displays student outcomes for local homeless students,⁹ homeless students statewide,¹⁰ local non-homeless students,¹¹ all statewide students,¹² and students with unique needs (e.g., English language learners,¹³ low socioeconomic status,¹⁴ and foster youth¹⁵).¹⁶ Using data from member institutions that submitted data to the Cal-PASS Plus system,¹⁷ Educational Results Partnership (ERP) matched 36 out of the 41 students served by the NYCL Monterey Program in the 2018-2019 school year. The match rate between the NCYL Monterey Program student roster and the Cal-PASS Plus data was about 87 percent for the 2018-2019 academic school year. Although the match rate is high, the small sample size (n=41) required, in some places, additional confidentiality measures to be taken to present the data.

Homelessness can have a detrimental effect on a student's ability to succeed in school. Young people experiencing homelessness are twice as likely to be chronically absent and are more likely to drop out before high school graduation.¹⁸ Fewer than a third of these students are proficient in Math and English. **For those students who drop out, not receiving a high school diploma only compounds their difficulties, as those who do not complete high school have an increased risk for further homelessness, as well as unemployment, and becoming involved in the juvenile justice or criminal justice system.** Every single one of the young people we have encountered are bright, funny, persistent, and come to us with many unique



WE ARE PROUD TO REPORT

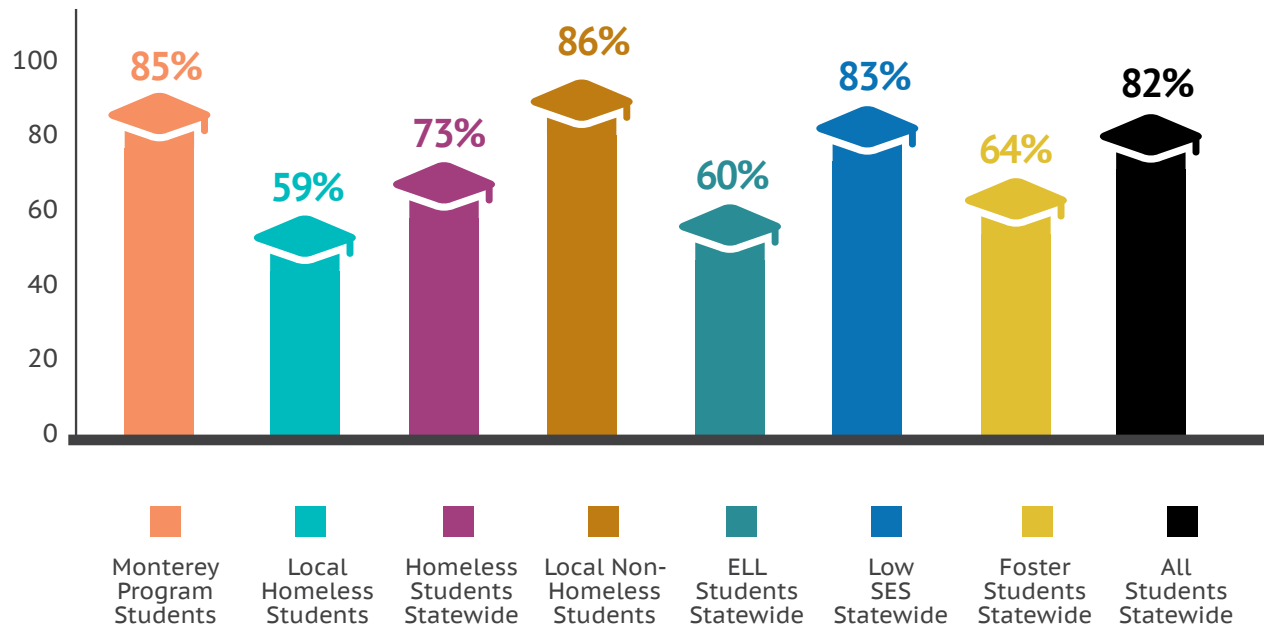
Our 12th grade students graduated at a higher rate (**85%**) than local homeless students (**59%**) and at a similar rate to local non-homeless students (**86%**). In addition, NCYL Program students achieved a higher graduation rate than both homeless students statewide (**73%**) and all students statewide (**82%**) in the 2018/2019 SY.

viewpoints and talents. Like all young people, they deserve communities, public support systems, and schools, that build them up, rather than place barriers in the way of their dreams. Our efforts and collaboration in Monterey County must work with youth to create a community that is centered around students' strengths and goals, so that all young people are closer to lives in which they feel empowered, important and loved.

The NCYL program works with students who are considered "high needs" by meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- > Has been previously identified as potential candidate to receive tier III (intensive) district supports;
- > Has had one or more behavior referrals in the last 4 months;
- > Meets criteria for chronic absence or is at risk of becoming chronically absent;
- > Transfers to the district mid-semester;
- > Is credit deficient;
- > Performing below or far below proficiency in ELA or Math;
- > Has failed 1 or more courses in the last 12 months; or
- > Identified as an unaccompanied minor.

Graduation Rates²⁰



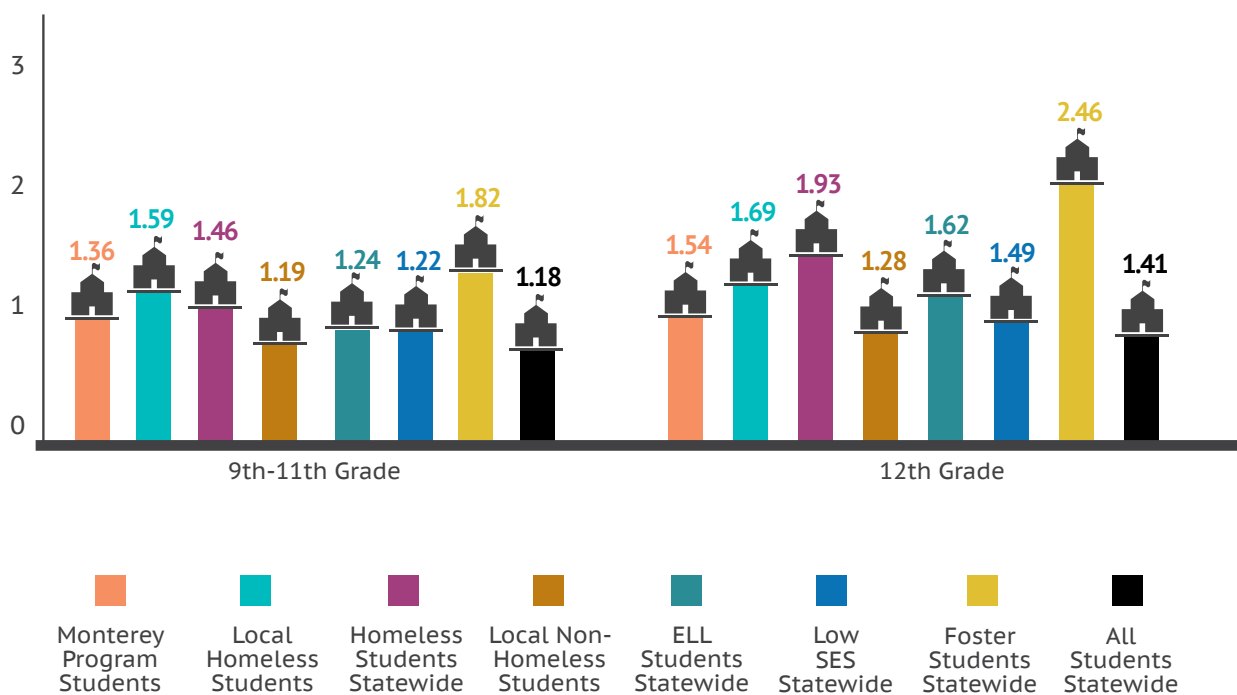
Students served by the NCYL program had lower rates of school attendance and higher rates of school suspension than their peers locally and statewide. Research shows that students who are chronically absent or suspended also have lower academic outcomes. We are proud to report that our 12th grade students graduated at a higher rate (85%) than local homeless students (59%) and at a similar rate to local non-homeless students (86%). In addition, NCYL Program students achieved a higher graduation rate than both homeless students statewide (73%) and all students statewide (82%) in the 2018/2019 SY. **Our students also moved schools less frequently (1.36 schools) than local homeless (1.59 schools), statewide homeless (1.46 schools), and foster (1.82 schools) 9th-11th grade students. And, our 12th graders experienced lower school mobility (1.52 schools) than both local (1.69 schools) and state students (1.93 schools) experiencing homelessness.¹⁹**

As part of our work, Education Liaisons support students to maintain school stability, and ensure that their educational rights provided by the McKinney-Vento Act are honored. For students experiencing houselessness or homelessness, their instability may result in credit deficiency from either moving schools or lack of engagement. Education Liaisons support students to maintain stability in their education, by encouraging students to remain in their school of origin when their residency changes and explaining how school changes can





Schools Attended²¹

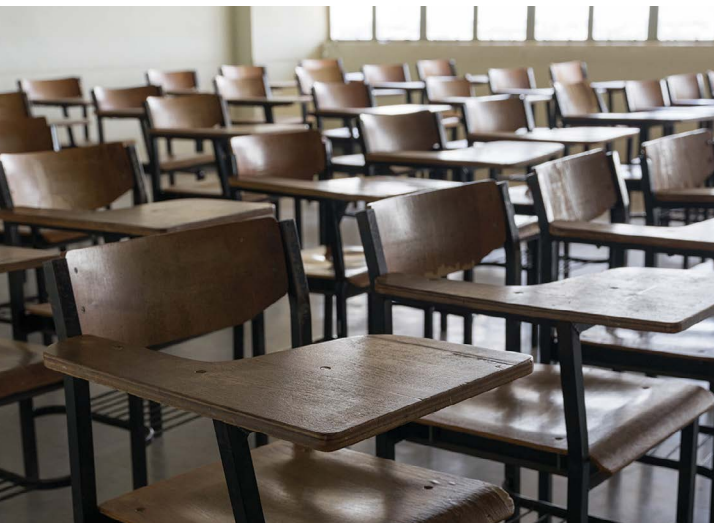


negatively impact educational outcomes. Additionally, students that experience homelessness and school mobility become eligible for AB1806, which allows students to graduate under state minimum requirements and exempts students from additional local district graduation requirements. Education Liaisons support students to determine if this exemption aligns with their overall educational goals and help make decisions that support their future.

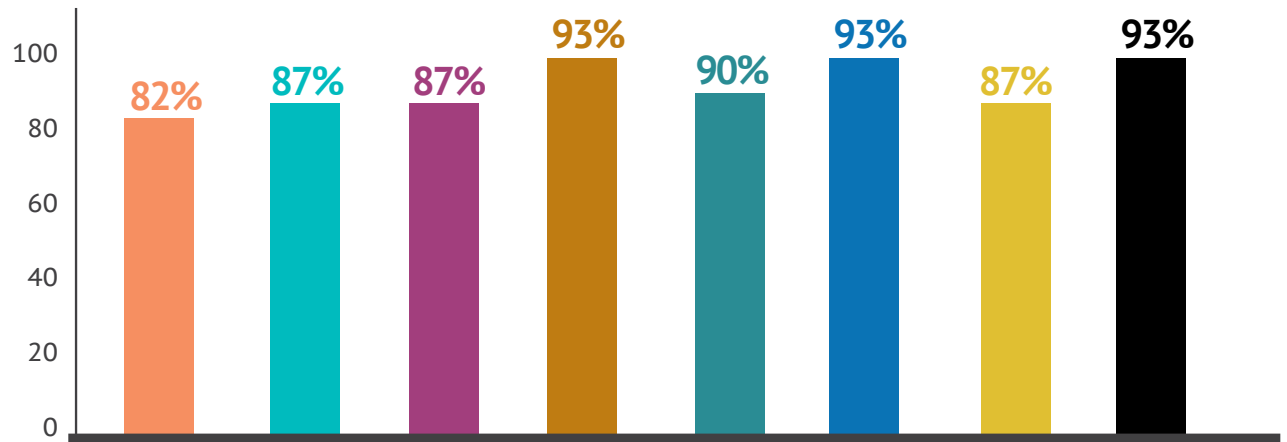
ERP found that students with unique needs attended alternative high schools at a higher rate than students statewide. More specifically, students engaged in our program and all foster youth students (reported in Cal-PASS) attended a comprehensive high school setting at a lower rate than all other student populations.

This metric shows that students with unique needs (youth in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, English language learners or low-income students) are at an elevated risk for lower school attendance rates than the general population. Students in our program attended school at a similar rate (82%) to local (87%) and statewide (87%) subgroups of students experiencing homelessness. School disconnection and chronic absenteeism are common among students identified as houseless or homeless.

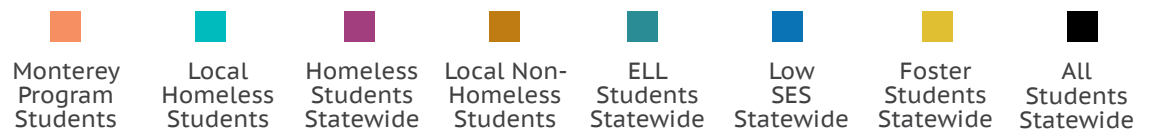
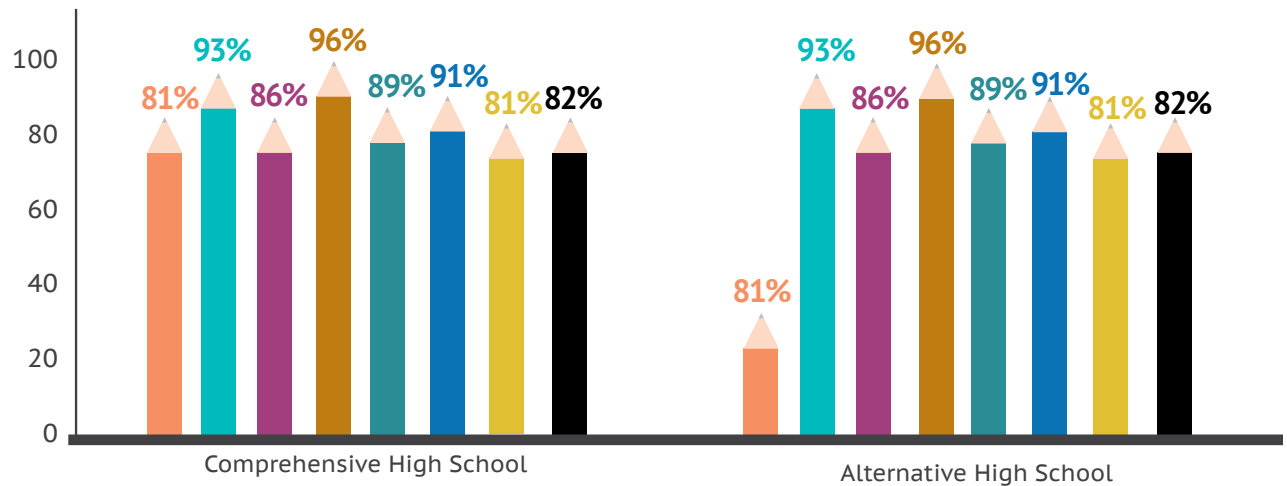
The average GPA (1.7) for students in our program was lower than both local (1.91) and statewide (2.25) students experiencing homelessness.²⁴ ERP also found that students with unique needs have a lower A-G completion rate than students statewide. Students in our program in the 12th grade completed only an average of 1.54 courses, whereas local homeless students completed 10.38 courses, and homeless students statewide completed an average of 16.46 courses.



Attendance Rates²²



School Type²³



Change from Baseline to Six-Month (N=19)²⁷



SELF-EFFICACY SCALE¹



FUTURE SUCCESS ORIENTATION SCALE



DISCUSSION FREQUENCY WITH ADULTS SCALE



KNOWLEDGE OF FINANCIAL AID STEPS/SUPPORT

Social Emotional Wellbeing and Youth Experiences

NCYL worked closely with Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to develop a survey on students' social emotional wellbeing dimensions that have been linked with positive youth development. The survey asked students about their self-efficacy,²⁵ future orientation,²⁶ sense of adult support, extracurricular participation at school, and knowledge of steps and resources related to financial aid for future education. The goal of the survey was to measure students' status on these dimensions when they began receiving services from NCYL and then to track any changes experienced while receiving services.

In Monterey, 44 students completed the baseline social emotional wellbeing survey and 19 students had surveys at both baseline and at the six-month follow-up. Three follow-up social emotional wellbeing surveys were virtually collected from students after the shelter-in-place order was in effect, but the inclusion or exclusion of these surveys does not affect the results significantly.

Changes in Social Emotional Wellbeing²⁸

- > Students experienced notable, large improvements in self-efficacy and future success orientation in their first six months of receiving services from NCYL.
- > Results for adult supports were less positive, with no measurable change in discussion frequency with adults (adults other than the Education Liaison). In contrast, students reported substantial gains in knowledge of future education support.
- > Results suggest students may have faced barriers to extracurricular participation: larger percentages stopped participating between baseline and six-month follow-up (32%) than started or stayed participating (16%), and close to two-thirds (63%) reported consistently not participating or having decreasing frequency of participation. Although over half (56%) reported being consistently encouraged to join activities, one-fifth (22%) reported never being encouraged.

RTI and NCYL teams co-designed a 15-item survey to collect students' experiences and feedback with the Compassion Systems program after being served for six months. Ten Monterey County students completed the Youth Experience Survey. Students were asked how helpful they found various program activities.²⁹

- > All ten reported one-on-one meetings with their Education Liaisons as very helpful.
- > Eight out of 10 students reported learning about educational rights as very helpful.
- > Students reported meeting with Education Liaisons in a range from more than once a week to three times per month and all 10 were satisfied with the amount of contact with their Education Liaison.

Students Share Their Success in Their Own Words

“I currently live in Salinas, and I either have to take a bus to school or get a ride from my brother who goes to Monterey Peninsula College. I am usually late because of this situation and was in jeopardy of being put on truancy probation. My athletic coach referred me to the NCYL program, and the Education Liaison. I like school, and I am very outgoing at school, if I was not in this living situation, I would probably be a 4.0 student. I feel that no matter what I could and will be a 4.0 student, no matter what situation I am in. During the semester, NCYL helped me work with the principal to get my schedule changed and access bus passes so that I could have consistent transportation. He also provided me with new clothes that I really needed. I learned about a lot about my rights being a McKinney Vento student and the transportation part helped me out a lot this year. After struggling at the beginning of the year, I found motivation academically, and I was able to reach my goal of attending college on a full ride scholarship.”



A.D., Student



“The cool thing about the program, is that the Education Liaison didn’t let me make up excuses. As a student and athlete, accountability is important and the NCYL program helped me to understand that I needed accountability for my academics.”

D.S., Student



“When I arrived from El Salvador I knew very little English and had a cousin that helped me enroll into school. I did not talk to anybody or hang out with anyone for over a month. I missed a lot of school since the beginning of the year because I was being taught things in English and I had no idea how to use the computer they gave me. I live with a lot of people and the house has no Wi-Fi to do work at home. A friend I met introduced me to the NCYL and at first, I was very hesitant to engage in the program. Talking to the Education Liaison helped me

get support I needed at school because the material I was being taught made no sense. I was able to meet with teachers individually and was given make up work to do. Something positive that happened for me while in the NCYL program, I was able access legal help regarding my citizenship and get documentation for working. School is important to me and I learned that I will be allowed to come back for a fifth year to complete school. I have not been in school since the 7th grade and knowing that I can get my high school diploma soon is very exciting.”

E.K., Student

One of my students was clearly a bright, driven young man. Every conversation I had with him was engaging and interesting. However, for many reasons, he found getting to school difficult—as an unaccompanied minor, some nights he had nowhere to sleep and would spend hours walking around downtown, making him too tired to come to school the next day. Other nights, even if he had somewhere to stay, he would wake up and struggle with his mental health, choosing instead to skip rocks at the beach. He didn't enjoy the "typical school day" and found it difficult to connect with students. He wanted to do an independent study, but his attendance was so low that the school wouldn't even consider it. Nevertheless, he expressed frequently how important receiving his diploma was. I advocated for him to his guidance counselor and principal to allow him to give independent study a shot. We also worked to get him reduced graduation requirements, as he had moved schools a lot and was very behind on his credits. Finally, we got him into an independent study program, and then when he turned 18, into the local Adult School. He prefers working individually and self-paced, and he graduated this past June 2020. He said he was interested in attending college, so we worked on his college applications and financial aid applications for fall 2020.

—Education Liaison

Local Partnerships to Improve Barriers to Educational Engagement

During our first year working within the county, we became keenly aware of the countless and profound challenges local young people experiencing homelessness face. We have witnessed how swiftly a single crisis can spiral into chaos, resulting in families losing their housing. Our team has supported multiple families who, after a crisis like a fire or a death in the family, have lost their homes and were not able to build up the funds necessary to buy or rent another residence. Additionally, there is insufficient access to shelters in the county, which results in families from across the county sleeping in cars or shuffling from house to house and living doubled and tripled up. For young people who are living on their own without a parent or guardian (i.e., unaccompanied), the situation is typically more dire. According to the January 2019 Continuum of Care (CoC) Point in Time count, over 90 percent of unaccompanied young people experiencing homelessness were completely unsheltered. There are no shelters in Monterey County that serve unaccompanied homeless minors under 18, so if a young person is unable to sleep at home, due to family strife, a violent environment, or any other reason, there is sadly no place to sleep. Unaccompanied minors with whom we have worked said they sleep in abandoned houses or parks or have spent multiple nights awake and wandering the streets. This not only is frightening for young people but can also be incredibly dangerous.

G.V. was referred during junior year. Due to challenges with her mother she was unaccompanied and sleeping on the street or couch surfing. While engaged in the program, G.V. lived in five different places, because she was a minor, she wasn't able to access a shelter within the county. G.V. worked with us to find a stable living arrangement and work that wouldn't interfere with her education. G.V. was able to accomplish her goals after several months and was able to enroll in the shelter once she turned 18. Unfortunately, she had trouble meeting the shelter curfew requirements and ended up houseless again. Eventually, she moved back in with her mother and is continuously working on their relationship while she plans for her long term future.

—Education Liaison

Education can often serve as a pathway out of poverty. Unfortunately, too many young people who experience housing instability become disconnected from school. Many end up having to change schools multiple times due to their new living locations, which leads to them falling behind in school work and not being able to receive the credits they need to graduate high school—not to mention making it more difficult to establish meaningful connections to their teachers and classmates. Due to the lack of basic resources such as showers and laundry, affordable public transportation, and access to regular food, many students are either unable to attend school regularly or feel too stigmatized to attend. Often students do not feel comfortable disclosing their housing status to their teachers or counselors. Not surprisingly, this profound instability also causes trauma, which directly impacts a student's ability to engage in their education.

Stronger Together, We Are Making Progress

We have been working in deep partnership with MPUSD, the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), Community Human Services (CHS), other local community-based organizations and government partnerships to raise awareness of youth experiencing homelessness within the county and to develop collaborative and innovative solutions to these challenges. During our initial year, we launched and facilitated a Homeless Youth Planning Group (HYPG) in partnership with CHS. The HYPG meetings brought together key organizations and individuals from across the county, including the Coalition for Homeless Service Providers, multiple school districts, post-secondary institutions, medical and behavioral health providers, local police, and other community-based organizations. They focused on identifying gaps in understanding the challenges youth experiencing homelessness face within the county and resources to address those gaps. During its tenure, the HYPG created a Monterey County Resource Guide and collaborated on a needs assessment. As an initial step in addressing challenges identified in the needs assessment, NCYL partnered with CHS and the California Coalition for Youth (CCY) to launch a Monterey County youth advisory board (YAB). Together, our organizations hosted several focus groups and recruiting meetings within the county to identify interest and ideas from local youth on launching a YAB. Focus groups were held at MPUSD high school sites, and our team partnered with local colleges, and CBOs like the Epi-Center.

Since the inception of our work within the county, we have benefited from a collaborative partnership with Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE). Their staff have served as key members on our Leadership Advisory Table and have helped us shape and refine our program model to most effectively serve Monterey County's students experiencing homelessness. One critical byproduct of the MCOE's assistance has been our ability to collaborate with MCOE to continue to serve students who have left MPUSD but continue to attend schools within the county. As our program has grown, our staff continues to meet quarterly with the MCOE regarding changes in the county, upcoming opportunities for this population, and best practices for working with young people experiencing homelessness.

Key findings from the needs assessment identified: (1) the lack of youth voice and presence in and at decision making tables that impact resources youth access; (2) an absence of transportation across county, and specifically in south county, prevented youth from readily accessing services; and, (3) the dearth in resources such as housing and basic needs for unaccompanied minors.



“Talking to adults has always been difficult for me but since I have connected with the Education Liaison, I learned that other people can support me. This program informed me of my educational rights and that due to transferring schools three times, I will be able to graduate with a waiver of local requirements by meeting only the state requirement of 130 credits”.

B.N., Student

In our collaborations, we also regularly share information and new resources with each other, and we are hoping to collaborate to convene countywide events supporting systems-involved young people over the next year.

Central to our work within the county is our collaboration with MPUSD. Working across all four high schools within the district, our Education Liaisons establish meaningful and shared commitments with all staff at the school site. Our team members participate in Tier II/III meetings helping to raise systemic and individual challenges for students experiencing homelessness, as well as to advocate for individual student needs. We have worked with school staff to develop schedules that accommodate the often-complicated lives of our students, helped ensure students have had access to resources on campus like laundry facilities and showers, and empowered and encouraged students to build relationships with their teachers by doing outreach and role-playing tough conversations.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

NCYL, Pivot Learning Partners and MPUSD joined forces in 2017 to envision a collaboration that lifted the lessons learned and direct experiences of engaging with young people into a model multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Pivot Learning is a nonprofit organization of K-12 education experts who work directly with districts and charters to address their biggest challenges, including raising student achievement and closing unconscionably large achievement gaps. Its mission is to revitalize public school systems so that all students have the opportunity to succeed in college and careers. Their experts have extensive expertise engaging with education leaders at all levels to provide them with the knowledge, skills and support proven to strengthen educational systems and transform teaching and learning. In this way, Pivot was the perfect partner to bring a wealth of resources and internal expertise focused on MTSS implementation into the larger vision for this project.

MTSS models have been increasingly utilized nationally, yet they have not been implemented broadly in California, despite the fact that the passage of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) provide both the funding and the construct to implement MTSS. **The LCAP provides the mechanism to institutionalize a comprehensive prevention, intervention and support system in a state-required plan.** MTSS effectively incorporates initiatives such as PBIS and socio-emotional learning-based strategies such as Restorative Justice and Safe and Civil Schools. Given that the community and family are critical aspects of an MTSS model, it promotes family engagement through the integration of academic and behavior supports in the community and home settings. The integration of these existing initiatives has been a hallmark of our collective work so that homeless students are educated in context to cultures that promote effective teaching and learning for all youth.

At a district level, the NCYL team participated in all Design Team meetings, in collaboration with Pivot Learning. The MTSS design team orients district level planning for education interventions for students in need of Tier II/III supports, with a lens toward inclusionary planning for students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, as part of our districtwide collaboration with MPUSD, our team has specifically focused on district initiatives such as improving transportation through better connections with Monterey-Salinas Transit. Based on the common challenges seen in the youth served, our Education Liaisons have developed and distributed strategies for improving the engagement and educational success of this population.

Addressing the specialized educational needs of students experiencing homelessness through an MTSS model has allowed MPUSD to organize across multiple initiatives and programs into relevant tiers, ensuring that the benefits of certain initiatives reach all students, and specifically that those with the greatest needs receive targeted, timely supports.



Strategies developed by our Education Liaisons to serve students experiencing homelessness, include:

- > a checklist for graduating seniors that outlines all the documents, processes and life skills young people need access to once they turn 18;
- > a letter that can be sent to families notifying them of the rights and resources available to them under McKinney-Vento, which was also updated during the COVID-19 health crisis to account for families struggling economically and concerned about losing their homes;
- > a printed community resource guide that lists resources available for youth experiencing homelessness, both at their schools and in their communities, which was converted into a live document that can be updated regularly and posted on websites to be used in real time; and,
- > a McKinney-Vento training for school staff, from teachers to front office staff, that offers information on what McKinney-Vento is, what youth homelessness looks like in Monterey County, and how schools can best support young people experiencing homelessness.

A Truly Shared Vision: Shaping Our Practice and Systems Improvement Framework

To date, our team has learned much about students experiencing homelessness, the realities and challenges they face, and the impact on their ability to meaningfully engage in their education. As we have moved forward, our relationships

SUPPORTING STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND DISTANCE LEARNING:

Students experiencing houselessness or who are homeless during the pandemic are at an increased risk for becoming disengaged in their education due to the loss of access to one of the stabilizing places in their lives. Many students already lack adequate housing, access to internet and basic resources like food and clothing. School often served as a place of safety and access.

When the pandemic hit and shut down schools, our team partnered with MPUSD, and local community-based organizations to ensure that students were safe, were knowledgeable about the ongoing changes to learning, and had access to basic needs. **MPUSD worked tirelessly to ensure there was thoughtful and inclusive planning for all students across the district to access education.** In addition to developing a comprehensive district learning plan mid-year, the district worked quickly to ensure that every student had access to technology or learning materials in an accessible language. Furthermore, aware of the ongoing limitations to internet access across the county, the school district provided internet access through mobile Wi-Fi packs, school buses wired with internet, and onsite access to learning packets. As the pandemic continues to impact in person learning continuity, MPUSD has been thoughtful to provide consistent and effective communication to their community. The district also has established a family resource center at every high school campus, where students can pick up school meals, access clothing and food pantries, showers, laundry service and other resources as needed.

Our team is working with school sites to:

- > **deliver students technology devices and other resources for those with transportation challenges;**
- > **work with the truancy team to identify and connect with students who are not engaging in daily synchronous learning;**
- > **support students and caregivers in understanding district distance learning plans and expectations;**
- > **coach and support students in navigating distance learning platforms; and,**
- > **bridge communication gaps between students and families with educators.**



We know there is still so much more work to be done. The work we do in Monterey County is only possible through the support and trust we have been given by our partners. Our core partnership with MPUSD, and specifically the passion of Donnie Everett, Assistant Superintendent of MTSS, Aaron Wood, Director of MTSS and Carlos Diaz, the MPUSD Homeless Youth Liaison, since the beginning stages of this work, has allowed us to build a program and serve the young people. Additionally, we are incredibly appreciative of the welcoming and collaborative partnership that we have experience from leadership and staff at Central Coast High School, Marina High School, and Seaside High School.

with students, their families and communities have deepened. We have learned alongside students and have evolved our practice in the second and third year of the program in reflection of the feedback we have heard. Our partnerships with Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and Monterey County Office of Education have been essential for building compassionate education systems in the Central Coast area. Together, we share a vision that spotlights and supports a positive educational journey for all youth experiencing homelessness. We have been mobilized and inspired by the efforts made by administration and staff to think innovatively in developing student supports, and we have enjoyed working alongside them.

Based on lessons learned in during the 2018/2019 SY, we decided to formally shift our program model from being education focused to holistically meeting students where they are, and supporting them to remove barriers to educational engagement. This includes helping to make referrals and connections to community-based resources (such as housing, health care, and shelter), so that students can safely focus on their education. Additionally, during

the 2019/2020 SY we decided to intentionally support students that are unaccompanied (not living with parent or guardians), as we found often these students are unable to access any other community-based resources.

Our hope is to further our work with the schools to increase their capacity to serve young people experiencing homelessness and to create conditions where every single young person is seen, lifted, and heard. **Our partnerships with local community-based organizations remain vital**, both so we can make adequate and accurate referrals to the young people we directly serve, but also so that, as a community, we can ensure that those programs are providing the type of support that young people want and need the most. In order to accomplish this, our staff, in partnership with Community Human Services, and now the Monterey / San Benito Continuum of Care will continue to build our Youth Advisory Board where youth voice must be an integral part of the conversation in any place decisions are being made about youth lives. We stand in solidarity with all the community members who have worked alongside our staff throughout this journey.

Endnotes

- ¹ Federal Data Summary: School Years 2015-2016 through 2017-2018. National Center for Homeless Education. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- ² Monterey Peninsula Unified School District. About Us. Retrieved October 12, 2020, from https://www.mpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1019885&type=d&pREC_ID=1305113.
- ³ Monterey Peninsula Unified School District. About Us. Retrieved October 12, 2020, from https://www.mpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1019885&type=d&pREC_ID=1305113.
- ⁴ Living situation of McKinney-Vento students, is data collected from housing surveys completed by families and students of all students attending one of MPUSD's four high schools.
- ⁵ Gender and ethnicity data for NCYL program participants are self-reported, collected and stored in our case management system, EdTeamConnect ("ETC").
- ⁶ This data is reflective of students identified as McKinney-Vento (experiencing homelessness) at the four high school sites within MPUSD.
- ⁷ This data represents school placement types for students during the 2018/2019 academic year and exceeds the total number of students due to school movements.
- ⁸ Program participants identify and set goals for themselves. Not applicable goals are goals that were identified as no longer relevant to the student. Unmet goals are goals that were not accomplished by the established deadline or by the end of program participation. This Data was collected and stored in our case management system, ETC.
- ⁹ Compassionate Systems' Monterey Program Data Narrative & Visuals, Education Results Partnership, Sept., 30, 2020, hereinafter, "ERP Report" (Report available upon request) at 1. (Students were identified as experiencing homelessness from six local school districts. ERP utilized data from six similar local districts for this report to ensure that any one member institution or district was not identifiable in the comparison.)
- ¹⁰ ERP Report at 1. (Students were identified as homeless based on their eligibility for homeless student services. They were identified as homeless through the Homeless Program flag in education program data submitted to Cal-PASS Plus.)
- ¹¹ ERP Report at 1. (All local 9-12 grade students enrolled in the 2018/2019 school year.)
- ¹² ERP Report at 1. (All 9-12 grade students enrolled in the 2018/2019 school year.)
- ¹³ ERP Report at 1. (These students who are found to be below proficient by the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and have not been found to be proficient since their initial assessment.)
- ¹⁴ ERP Report at 1. (Students were identified as low socioeconomic status based on their eligibility for free/reduced school lunch.)
- ¹⁵ ERP Report at 1. (Students were identified as a foster youth in any K-12 district or County Office of Education Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) 5.7 report.)
- ¹⁶ ERP Report at 1. (Students that were identified with multiple unique needs were included in each of the student groups. For example, if a student was identified as an English language learner and low-socioeconomic status, their data were included in both English language learners and low-socio economic status groups.)
- ¹⁷ ERP Report at 1. (Cal-PASS Plus is a statewide clearinghouse of longitudinal data following students from K-12 into the workforce, available at <https://www.calpassplus.org/Home>.)
- ¹⁸ National Center for Homeless Education (2015). Federal Data Summary School Years 2011-2012 to 2013-2014, available at <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/data-comp-1112-1314.pdf>.
- ¹⁹ ERP Report at 6. (School mobility is calculated as a cumulative rate for students over the course of grades 9-12. It is expected that the average number of schools attended would increase over the years. Due to FERPA requirements, the sample sizes for each grade level do not meet the reportable requirement and as a result, 9th-11th grade school years were combined to produce a school mobility rate for the 2018-2019 academic year. Furthermore, due to incomplete coverage of all districts statewide, this data is only representative of the Cal-PASS Plus member districts.)
- ²⁰ ERP Report at 8. (The graduation rate metric shows whether a 12th grade student graduated from high school during the 2018-2019 academic year.)
- ²¹ ERP Report at 6, 7. (The schools attended metric shows the total number of high schools a student attended.)
- ²² ERP Report at 4. (The attendance rate metric shows the percentage of school days that a student attended during the 2018-2019 academic year.)
- ²³ ERP Report at 3, 4. (The school type metric shows the type of school students attended (i.e. Alternative school of choice, Continuation high school, County community, District community day school or a public high school) during the 2018-2019 academic year.)
- ²⁴ ERP Report at 6. (The cumulative high school GPA metric shows the grade point average among courses taken by a student during their high school years (grades 9 through 12). Only courses taken for a letter grade are included in the calculation and these courses may be taken in any school. GPA values range from 0 to 4.0 and each full point difference represents a full letter grade difference.)
- ²⁵ Laird, Jennifer, and Siri Warkentien. Compassionate Systems California: Findings from Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Youth Experience Surveys. RTI International, 2020 (hereinafter "RTI Report") at 1 (available from NCYL upon request) [citing Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological review*, 84(2), 191. (Self-efficacy measures an individual's belief in their ability to produce certain outcomes through their behavior and actions.)].
- ²⁶ RTI Report at 1 [citing Johnson, S. R. L., Blum, R. W., & Cheng, T. L. (2014). Future orientation: a construct with implications for adolescent health and wellbeing. *International journal of adolescent medicine and health*, 26(4), 459-468 (Future orientation measures the ability to set future goals and plans and a positive outlook on one's future.)].
- ²⁷ See RTI Report at 3, 18. (For the social and emotional wellbeing scores, the direction of the difference between baseline and follow-up, and the effect size of the difference, is presented by directional arrows. Effect sizes quantify the size of the difference between the baseline and follow-up results, and were calculated by taking the difference between the pre and post scores and then dividing it by the pooled standard deviation. RTI uses a standard threshold of 0.2 to indicate whether there was at least a "small" effect.)
- ²⁸ See RTI Report at 16-21.
- ²⁹ See RTI Report at 3, 19-21.



The Compassionate Systems Team at
the National Center for Youth Law
foster-ed.org