Nurturing Academic Talent Among Foster Students
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Nurturing Academic Talent Among Foster Students

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An on-demand archive of this webinar will be available at www.edweek.org/go/webinar in less than 24 hrs.
Nurturing Academic Talent Among Foster Students

Angela Griffin, Chief Program Officer – Treehouse
Bill Dunbar, Principal – Shorewood High School

August 8, 2018
Introduction
Angela Griffin and Bill Dunbar
Less than half of youth in foster care graduate from high school
Foster youth in King County
graduate high school at the same rate as their peers with a plan for their future by 2017.

Our Goal:
Less than 2% of youth in care go to a 4-year college, yet every kid dreams about their future.
No High School Diploma = Dire Outcomes

1 in 5 alumni of foster care will be homeless within a year of aging out.

33% of foster care alumni live below the poverty line.

That's 3x the national rate.
Treehouse Goal:
By 2022, youth in foster care across Washington state will graduate from high school at the same rate as their peers, with support and a plan to launch successfully into adulthood.
Treehouse Progress to Goal

24 persistent 5th year seniors graduated in 2017.
The Treehouse Class of 2016 graduation rate is now 7% higher than the extended rate for all students in Washington state!
Graduation Success Program Model

This year, we expect to serve 900 youth in 26 school districts.

Check & Connect:
Weekly monitoring & individualized interventions:
A = Attendance
B = Behavior
C = Course Performance
Build a support team around youth

Student-Centered Planning:
• Youth-driven Student-Centered Plan
• Educational Advocacy to remove barriers
• Youth define their support network
• Extracurricular and school activities
• Meet material needs
• Coach self-determination & persistence
College Readiness

• Less than 1% of Treehouse youth in highly capable programs, early college programs or taking rigorous courses

• Less than 10% of youth in foster care nationwide complete a college education
Barriers to Participation

- Trauma
- School instability
- Unstable support systems
- Not identified or referred
- Low academic performance
Partnering with Schools

- ESSA requirement of knowing which youth are in foster care and using data to ensure support of gifted or highly capable students
- Provide transportation or transition support for youth engaged in highly capable programs or college prep courses
- Maintain coordination between school staff, caregivers and social workers
- Cultivate strong relationships within school environment
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities
Supporting Foster Youth in Shoreline Public Schools

Bill Dunbar
District and Building Data 2018

- Shoreline School District
  - 9600 students at 13 sites
  - 4 secondary schools
  - Suburb immediately North of Seattle

- Average 30-35 foster youth per year in Shoreline Elementary Schools
- Average 30-35 youth at 2 middle and 2 High Schools
- 14 of 17 Foster youth in Grades 9-12 at Shorewood High School in 2018
  - 100% free and reduced lunch services
  - 3 students with 504 plans, 9 special education
  - 1 ELL
  - 5 students on standard/post secondary track
  - Special Education students may continue at a transition program linked to the area community college until age 21 unless they graduate and enroll in the community college or other vocational program
  - (none currently tested as qualified for Gifted Program)
Foster Youth in High School

- Potentially at risk: possible trauma, interrupted education, repeated school transitions, possible poverty and other adverse circumstances

- Foster youth are provided an intervention designed to increase school completion and academic success.
  - “The role of the Check & Connect mentor is modeled after one of the commonly identified protective factors in resiliency literature – the presence of an adult in the child’s life to fuel motivation and foster the development of life skills needed to overcome obstacles.” (Masten & Coatsworth, 1988 in Christensen, et al 2012.)

- Who can serve as mentor?
  - Undergraduate degree
  - Agency and school district personnel
  - Volunteers as supervised by the school district
... **Foster Youth in High School**

- Components of the “Check and Connect” model:
  - A primary “mentor” from *Treehouse* who works with students for a minimum of two years
    - Liaison with designated school counselor
    - Regular checks with the foster youth
    - Access to data from the school (educational progress, other)
    - Support engagement with school through goal setting

- School counselor liaison provides a specific connection including early access to college and career center for planning for post secondary education, college and career planning, potential scholarships and other resources
  - Collaboration with the *Treehouse* mentor
  - Systematic monitoring attendance, academics and behavior
… Foster Youth in High School

- Goals:
  - Build relationship(s), counsel/cognitive behavioral counseling
    - Develop awareness of the value of education
    - School attachment and commitment
    - Supporting learned competence and motivation
    - Self regulation
    - Problem solving and resilience
  - School becomes a consistent, supportive environment in the Foster Youth’s life
  - School completion and achievement
  - Post secondary planning, preparation and engagement
High School Program

- College-going school culture with a philosophical commitment to some college in the high school for all students:
  - Honors and Advanced classes in all secondary schools
  - 22 AP classes at Shorewood
  - Several “College in the High School” classes
  - “Running Start” at local Community Colleges
  - Open enrollment

- Career and technical education requirement

- All students encouraged to try 1-2 college level classes in the supported environment at high school
Other School Supports that are Complimentary to the ‘Check and Connect’ Counseling Model

- AVID or other success oriented student cohorts
- “Homework Club”- after school interventions
- Peer tutoring – Honor Society students
- Paraprofessional tutoring- general or subject based
Q & A
THANK YOU!

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Suggested Reading from *Education Week*:

“The Gifted Child in Foster Care: Lost in the Shuffle”
George Garcia, a former foster-care child now mentoring foster students in college, found his way into academically challenging classes through friends. Many bright foster-care students aren't so lucky.

**Spotlight on Gifted Education**
This Spotlight explores different ways schools are approaching gifted learning and the numerous issues facing gifted students and those who teach them.