

# Education Instability for Children and Youths in Foster Care

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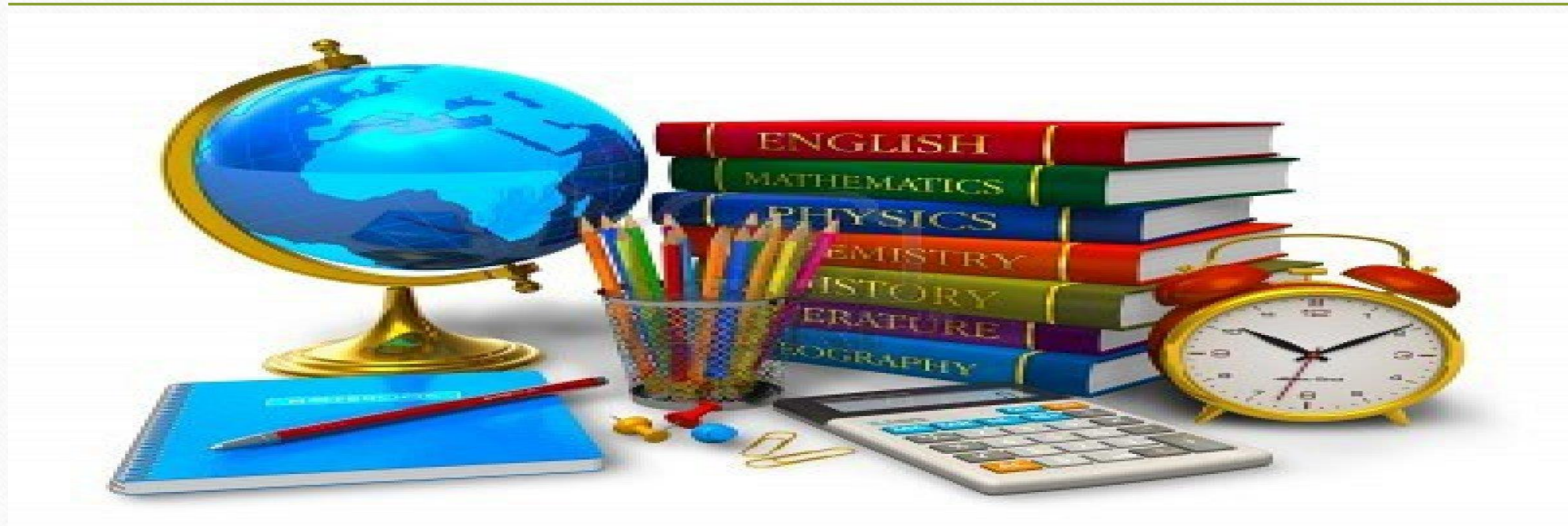


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# Introduction

- ❑ Education instability for children and youths in the foster care system is a serious problem.
- ❑ Due to unstable home placements children and youths in care experience one or more home placement changes within a year.
- ❑ Changing schools hinders not only their learning, but causes higher rates of grade retention, absenteeism, tardiness, truancy, dropouts and lower scores on standardized tests.
- ❑ The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed in 2008 to ensure education stability but has been inadequate and fails to do so.
- ❑ In order for children and youths in care to succeed academically in school it is important for them to remain in their same school of origin, receive fast seamless transitions from one school to another when school change can not be avoided, have access to school counselors, outside resources and lastly involving them in their educational planning.

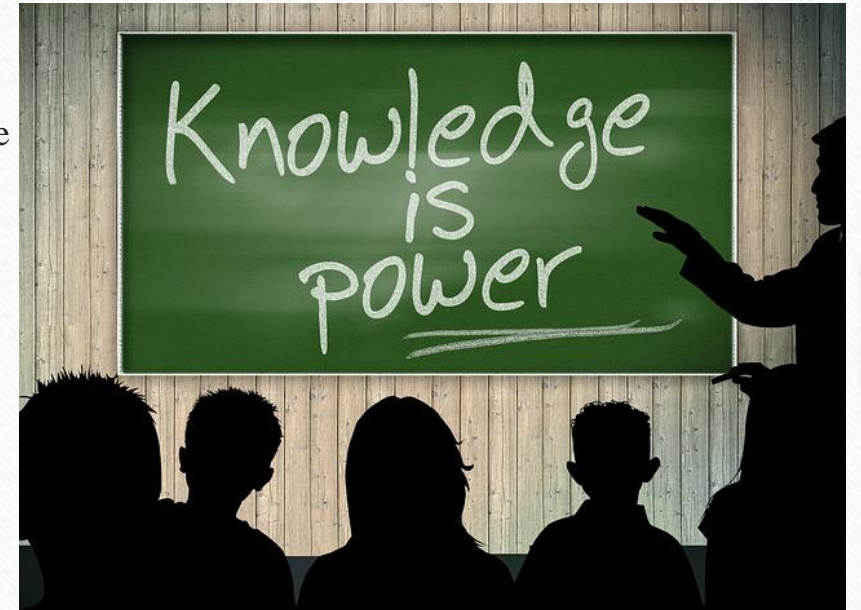


Image: Huffington post

Sources: Educational Neglect (pp. 1-70, Rep.). (2000). Advocates for Children of New York, Lips, D. (2007). Foster Care Children Need Better Educational Opportunities



# The Problem

- ❑ Children and youth in care are faced with significant challenges to receive positive educational experiences and academic achievement.
- ❑ Education does not only support economic success, it can enhance a child's well-being, help make transiting into adulthood easier and increase the possibility to achieve personal fulfillment in life.
- ❑ Frequent home placement changes and school transfers disrupts children and youths in care learning process and overall takes a toll on their well-being and learning development.
- ❑ These changes constitute to education instability for children and youths in the foster care system.

Source: Zetlin, A. G., Weinberg, L. A., & Shea, N. M. (2006).

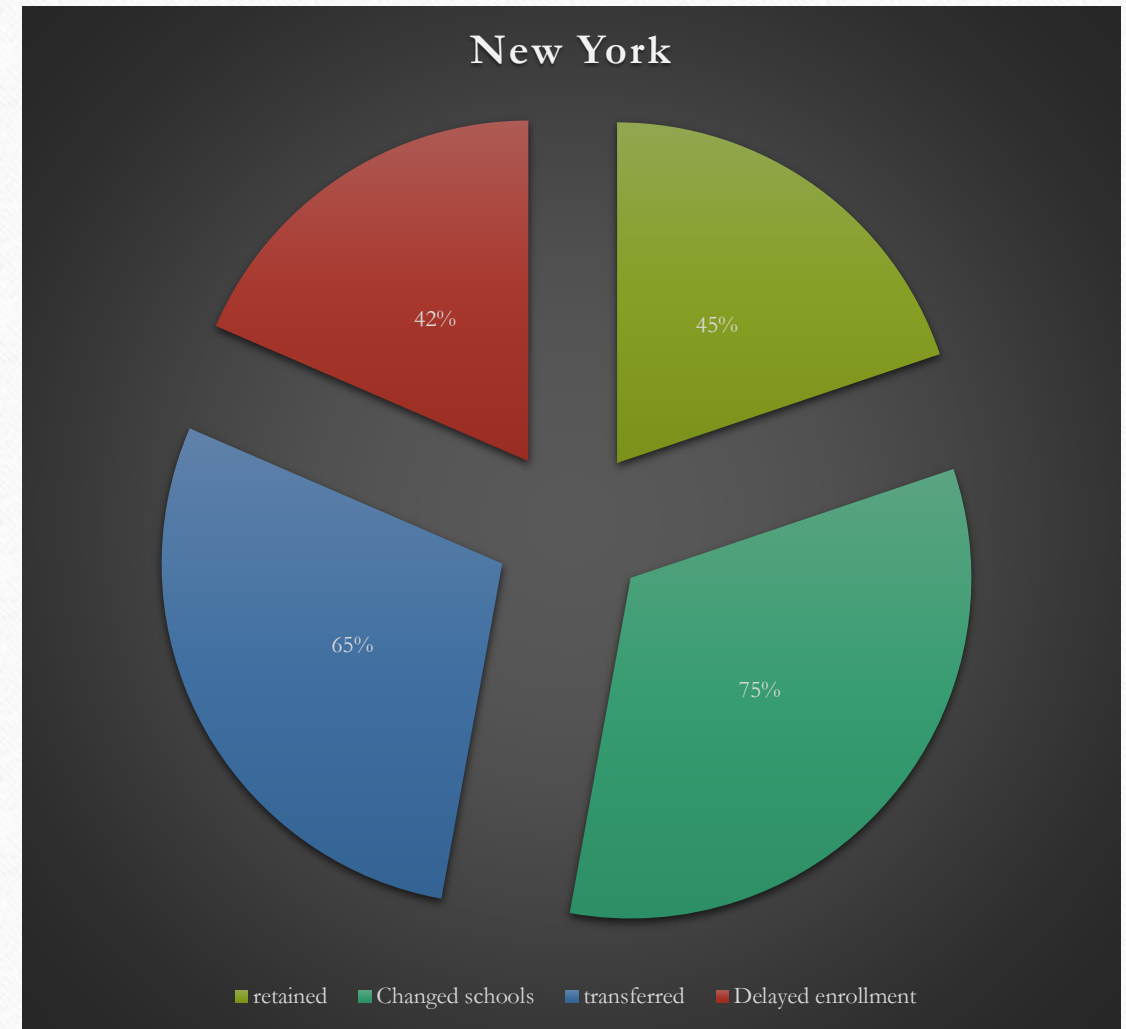


Image: Matt Slocum/AP Photo

## Scope of Education Instability

- ❑ In New York State a large amount of children and youth in care are placed in schools outside of their borough of origin.
- ❑ In 2000 a New York study of more than 60 children and youths in the foster care system found that 75% changed schools once placed in care and almost 65% transferred to another school in the middle of the school year.
- ❑ When transferring schools 42% of the children and youth studied experienced a large delay in enrollment and beginning school immediately due to misplaced or lost records.
- ❑ Once placed into a new school 45% of youths in care reported being retained at least once.

Source: NGA. (2007). Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care.







Images: [blogs.lse.ac.uk](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk) , [huduser.gov](http://huduser.gov)

## Impact of Education Instability on Children and Youths in Care

- ❑ Education instability affects children and youths ability to develop positive supportive relationships with their teachers and peers.
- ❑ Those positive supportive relationships help create holding environments for many children and youths in care. It also creates positive educational development and experiences.
- ❑ Children in care rarely receive early intervention services, putting them at a great risk of developmental delays.
- ❑ Children and youths in care have a hard time receiving access to appropriate special education services.
- ❑ Failure to address children and youths in care educational needs impacts their behavior at school leading to higher rates of absentees, suspensions and expulsions from school.
- ❑ Its also impacts their self-esteem and confidence leaving them discouraged

Source: Educational Neglect (pp. 1-70, Rep.). (2000). Advocates for Children of New York

## Government Response to Education Instability for Children and Youths in Care

- ❑ The Fostering Connections Act was passed in 2008. It required State agencies to ensure that a child would remain in the same school once placed in care at the best interest of the child. It also provided money for transportation to and from school.
- ❑ It also ensured that when children and youths in care have to transition into a new school the process would be seamless and happen immediately with all of their educational records.
- ❑ This act still needs more improving and is inadequate due to important question being left unaddressed such as;
  - Who will provide adequate transportation?
  - who will pay for the transportation ?
  - Who determines what is in the best interest of the child/youth?

Source: NGA. (2007). Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care



**Fostering  
Connections  
Legislation**

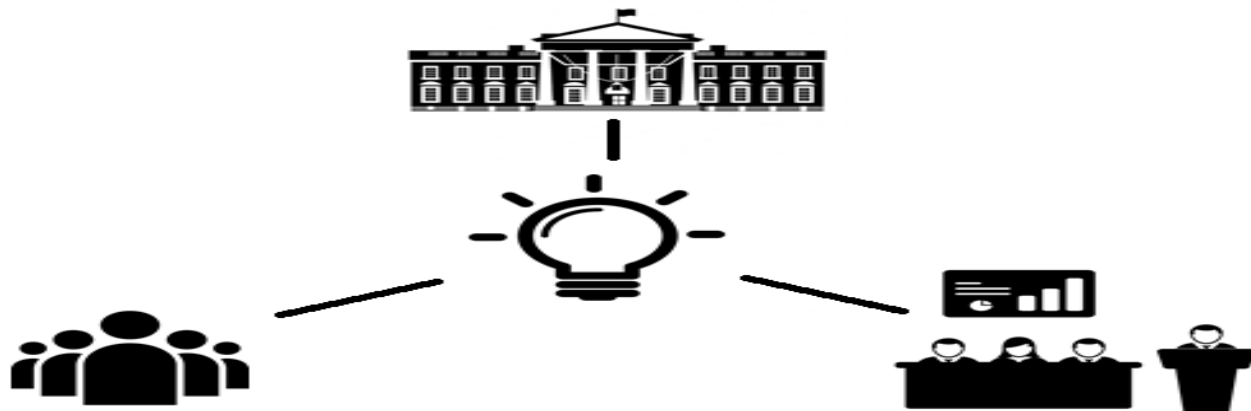
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# Policy Recommendation



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- Government officials need to work to improve learning opportunities for all children and youth in foster care by expanding education options.
- By expanding education options it will ensure that every child receives stable and high quality education.
- School districts and child welfare agencies should work together collaboratively in New York to improve school stability for children in care.

## Policy Recommendation Cont.

- ❑ Government officials should create an electronic data base for all schools to access and transfer files only for children and youths in the foster care system
- ❑ This data base will allow records to be obtained and accessed easily, and eliminate confusion around children and youths in care with special educational needs.
- ❑ This will also help staff members and teachers become aware and familiar with students who are in the foster care system within their schools, so that if these begin to fall behind in their classes or act out, they know how to address the problem to come up with adequate solutions that would help them succeed academically.



Image: Youth initiatives ni



# Conclusion

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- ❑ When children and youths are placed into the foster care system, education stability needs to be a key priority.
- ❑ Biological parents and foster parents should always be informed about their children/youths educational needs and entitlements.
- ❑ Education instability does not only affect children and youth in care well-being, it affects their educational success.
- ❑ Government officials continue to fail children and youth in care leading to their educational needs continuing to be unmet creating additional barriers to positive outcomes.
- ❑ Many children/youth in care voices are often silenced and with the help of child welfare agencies their voices can be heard and valued.
- ❑ Children and youths in the foster care system deserve to receive stable quality education.



**Empowerment  
Through Education**  
*Living A Dream,  
Building A Future*

Image: fay observer

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