

Indiana Department of Education and Department of Child Services Foster Care Education Data Report 2020-2021 School Year

Indiana’s Foster Youth Statistics

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) identified that there were 25,218 children in foster care at some point during calendar year (CY) 2020. This is a 6.1% increase in the number of children in foster care compared to CY 2014 (23,771) and a 20.8% decrease in children in out-of-home care since CY 2018 (31,857). Note that 11.6% of those in out-of-home care during CY 2020 were under age 1 and 38.9% were younger than 5. Out of the 25,218 Hoosier children in foster care during CY 2020, 68.9% were white, 17.9% were Black and 12.7% were two or more races.

Indiana Foster Youth Education: Key Findings

- The vast majority of foster students were enrolled in traditional public schools in the 2020-2021 school year (90%), followed by charter schools (5.5%).
- Foster students were less likely to graduate on time than all students (54.2% vs. 86.7%), and foster students that did graduate were more likely to have a graduation waiver (31.4% of foster students vs. 10.1% of all students).
- Foster graduates also were less likely to earn rigorous diplomas – 20.1% of 2021 foster graduates received General diplomas, compared to 9.9% of all students, and 12.1% of foster graduates earned Honors diplomas, compared to 39.3% of all students. This suggests that foster graduates are likely to be less prepared than non-foster students for college or careers after high school.
- Foster students were retained another year in their grade at a rate three times higher than all students.
- Foster students were twice as likely to be suspended in the 2020-2021 school year than all students, and four times more likely to be expelled.
- Foster students performed below all students on all state assessments in 2020-2021:
 - 19.2% of foster students passed the English/language Arts (ELA) portion of ILEARN grades 3-8, compared to 40.5% of all students, and only 16.9% passed math, compared to 36.9% of all students.
 - Roughly seven in ten (71.0%) foster students passed the IREAD-3, compared to 81.2% of all students.
 - Only one-third (32.7%) of foster students passed the ISTEP+ Grade 11 ELA assessment, compared to 65.9% of all students, and 8.7% passed math, compared to 37.1% of all students.

Enrollment by School Type

For the entire academic year 2020-2021, there were 18,412 foster students enrolled in K-12 schools. On October 1, 2020 (the state’s official enrollment count date), there were nearly 14,500 foster students enrolled in school. Roughly 90% of those students were enrolled in traditional public schools (compared to 88.4% of all students), and 5.5% were enrolled in charter schools (compared to 4.5% of all students). See Table 1.

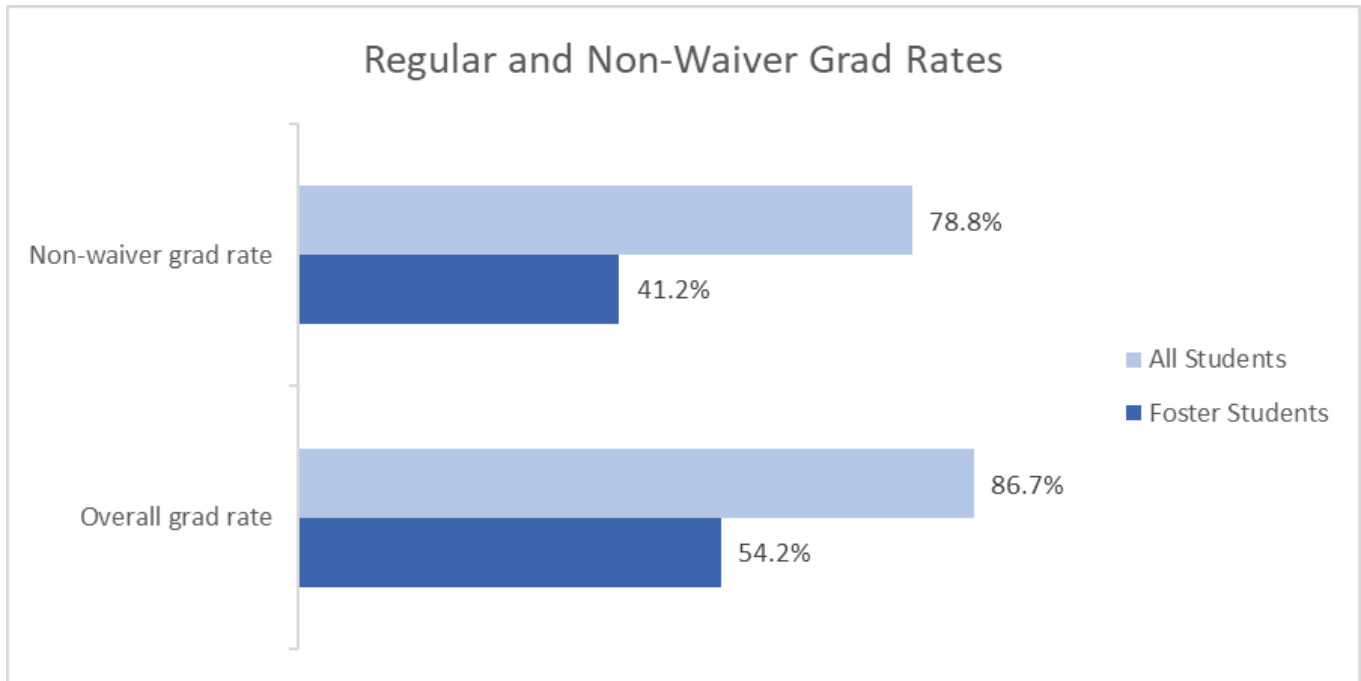
	Foster Care Student Count	Percentage	All Students	Percentage
Traditional Public	13,032	90.0%	983,550	88.4%
Charter	802	5.5%	49,691	4.5%
State Run (Blind, Deaf, Corrections)	44	0.3%	772	0.1%
Non-Public*	601	4.2%	78,655	7.1%

TOTAL	14,479			
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*Not all non-public schools report enrollment data.

Graduation and Diploma Earning

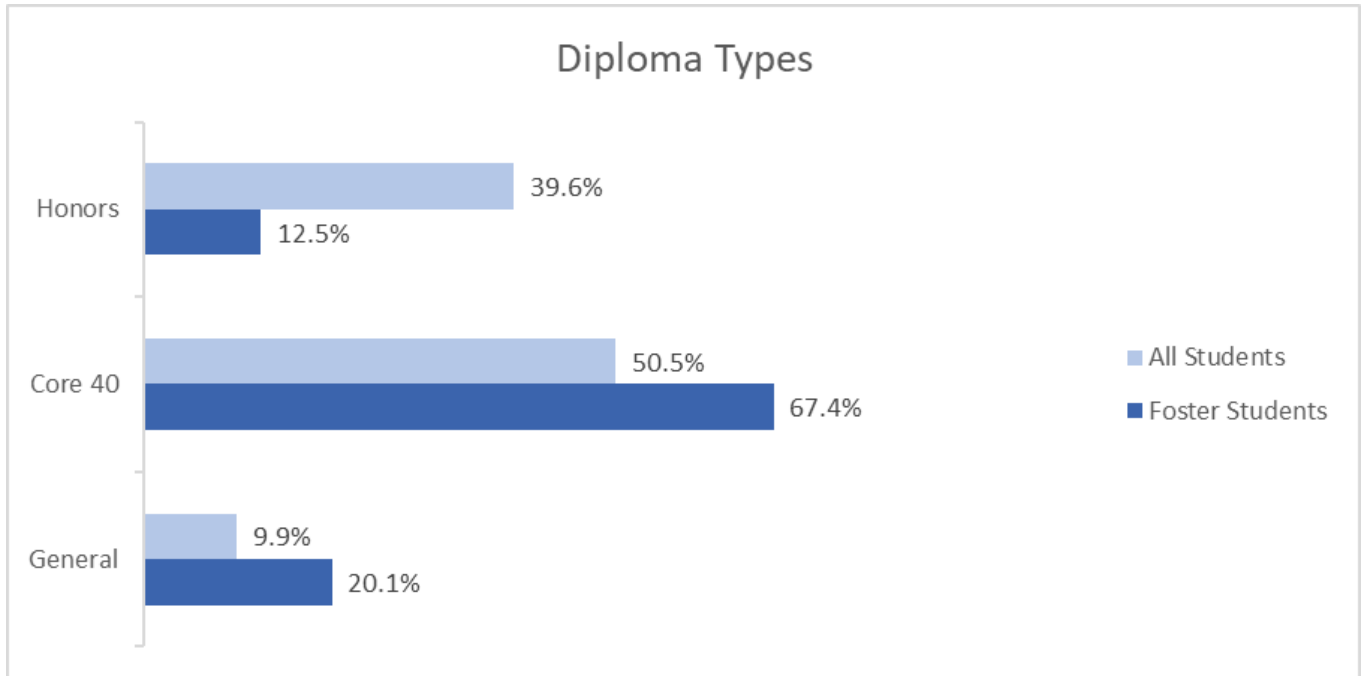
Of the 679 foster care students in the 2021 four-year graduation cohort, 54.2% (368) graduated on time, compared to 86.7% of all students, roughly 1.6 times lower. The 2021 four-year graduation rate for foster youth was 3 percentage points lower than the prior year. Moreover, youth in foster care were more likely to graduate with waivers¹ than all students. Among the 368 graduates in foster care, 31.4% or 88 students received a waiver, compared to 10.1% of all graduates. Thus, the non-waiver graduation rate² for foster students was 41.2%, nearly two times lower than the state non-waiver rate of 78.8%.



In addition to having lower graduation rates than all students, graduates in foster care were also more likely to earn less rigorous diplomas than all students. Of the 368 foster care graduates in 2021, one in five (20.1%, 74) earned a General diploma, compared to 9.9% of all students. Foster care graduates were more than three times less likely than all students to earn Honors diplomas than all students – 46 foster care graduates (12.5%) earned an Honors diploma, compared to 39.3% of all students. Roughly two thirds (67.4%, 248) of foster graduates earned a Core 40 diploma. 0.3% of foster care graduates are graduating with an International Baccalaureate diploma, the same rate as all students. Students who graduate with waivers and/or those who earn General diplomas are less likely to pursue a credential or certificate beyond a high school diploma than those who do not need waivers and those who earn Honors diplomas. Those foster care students who do enroll in postsecondary education are more likely to need remediation. Thus, students in foster care who do graduate are likely finishing high school less ready for college and careers than their non-foster peers.

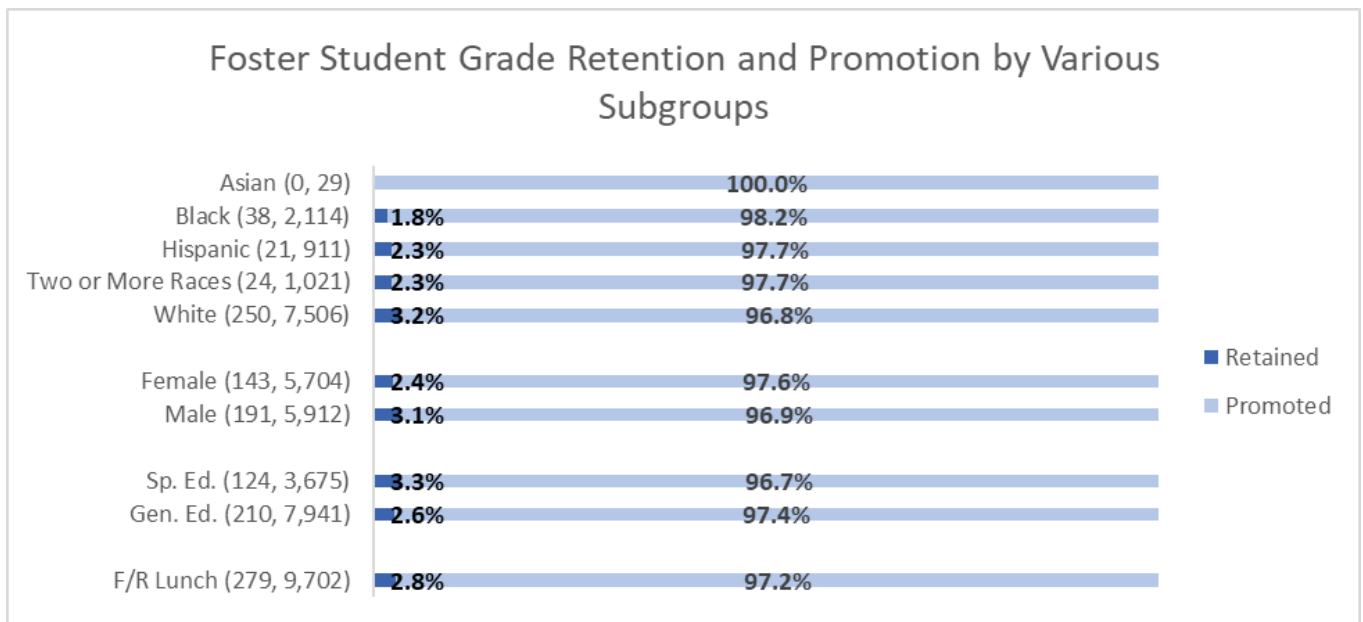
¹ Waivers can be granted to students who did not pass the graduation qualifying exam (GQE) or were unsuccessful in completing a postsecondary readiness competency requirement.

² The non-waiver graduation rate considers graduates with waivers as non-graduates in the rate calculation (in other words, graduates receiving waivers are excluded from the numerator of the graduation rate calculation).



Grade Retention and Promotion

Overall, 97.2% of foster students³ (11,616) were promoted to the next grade from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, while 2.8% (334) were retained for another year in their grade. This rate was three times higher than the rate for all students (just 1%). Retention for foster students tended to be highest in kindergarten (11.5% were retained) and the early elementary school grades (4.9% for Grade 1, 2.4% for Grade 2, and 3.2% for Grade 3).

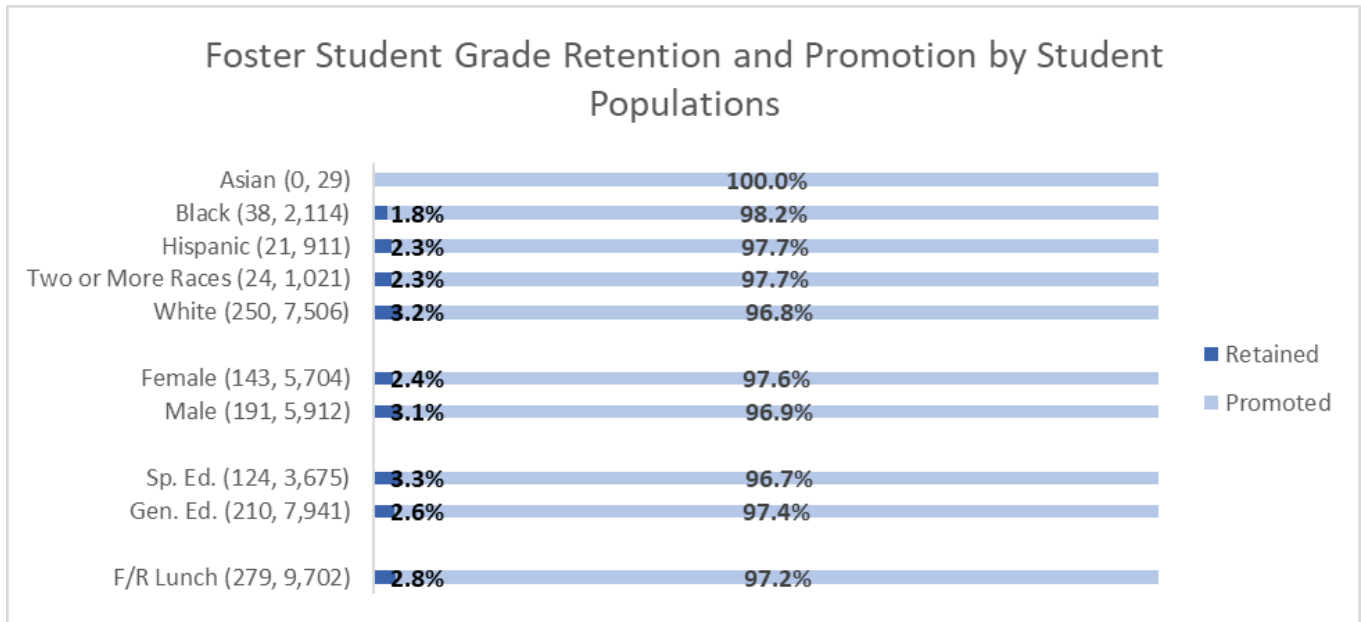


By race/ethnicity, retention rates were roughly similar across groups, with Asian foster students having the lowest retention rate (0%) and White students having the highest retention rate (3.2%)⁴. Male foster students had slightly

³ Percentages are based on a denominator of 11,950 foster students who were enrolled in both 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

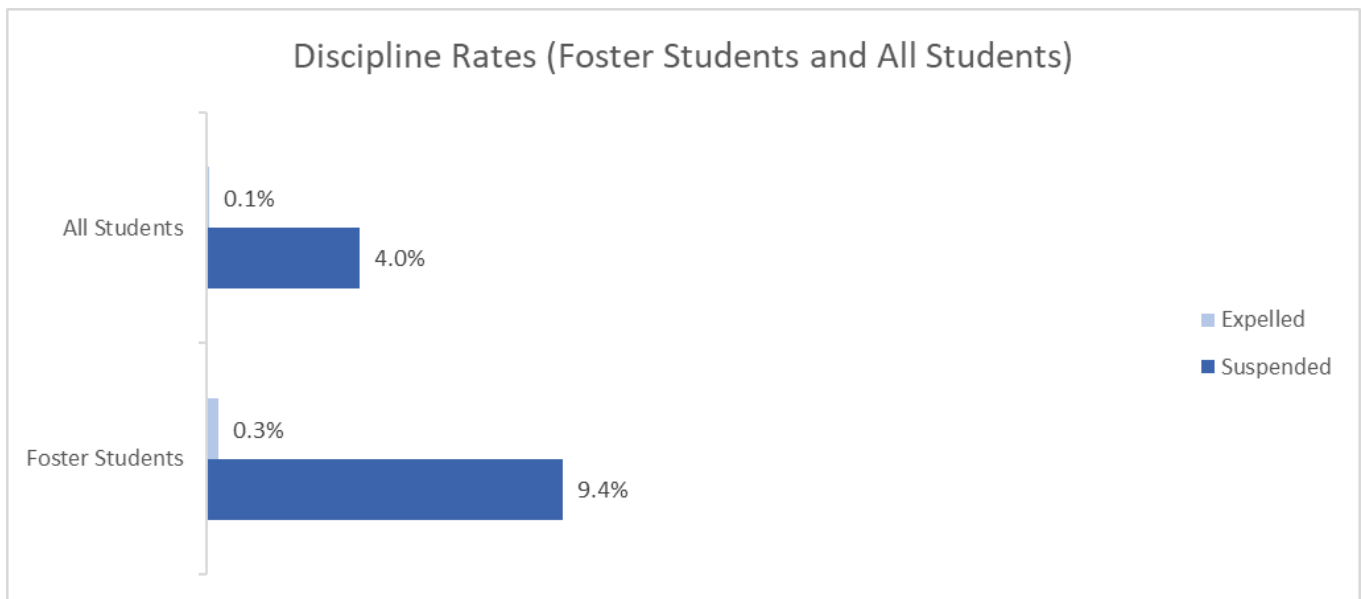
⁴ Note that promotion/retention rates are not reported for the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaskan Native racial/ethnic student populations for privacy reasons, due to small sizes and suppression rules.

higher retention rates than female students (3.1% vs. 2.4%, respectively), and foster students in special education had slightly higher retention rates than those in general education (3.3% vs. 2.6%, respectively).



Discipline (Suspension and Expulsion)

In 2020-2021, students in foster care were suspended at a rate more than two times higher than all students, and they were expelled at a rate nearly four times higher. There were 1,728 foster students suspended in 2020-2021, a rate of 9.4%, and 58 foster students were expelled (a rate of 0.3%).⁵ Comparatively, 4% of all students were suspended, and 0.1% were expelled.



By grade, foster students in grades six through nine had the highest suspension rates, with 23.6% of foster students in eighth grade suspended; 21.9% of seventh graders; 21.2% of ninth graders, and 16.4% of sixth

⁵ Based on a unique count of 18,412 foster students enrolled at any time during the 2020-2021 school year.

graders. Expulsion rates were highest for foster students in ninth grade (1.6%), followed by students in eighth grade (1.1%) and those in seventh grade (0.9%).

Table 2: Students in Foster Care - Discipline Disaggregated by Grade

	Students Suspended (#)	Students Suspended (%)	Students Expelled (#)	Students Expelled (%)	Total Foster Students*
Pre-Kindergarten	2	0.3%	0	0.0%	695
Kindergarten	71	4.9%	0	0.0%	1,429
Grade 1	70	5.5%	0	0.0%	1,279
Grade 2	68	6.3%	0	0.0%	1,086
Grade 3	80	7.9%	0	0.0%	1,013
Grade 4	99	10.2%	0	0.0%	971
Grade 5	119	12.1%	2	0.2%	983
Grade 6	167	16.4%	4	0.4%	1,020
Grade 7	231	21.9%	10	0.9%	1,056
Grade 8	255	23.6%	12	1.1%	1,082
Grade 9	251	21.2%	19	1.6%	1,182
Grade 10	184	15.7%	7	0.6%	1,173
Grade 11	98	9.6%	4	0.4%	1,024
Grade 12	39	6.3%	0	0.0%	619

*Unique count of foster students enrolled at any time during 2020-2021.

By race/ethnicity, foster students who are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Two or More Races, and Black were suspended at higher rates than other racial/ethnic subgroups (15.0%, 12.7%, and 12.4%, respectively), although foster students in all racial/ethnic student populations other than Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander had suspension rates that exceeded those of all students (4%). By gender, male foster students were nearly twice as likely to be suspended than female foster students, but again, both groups had suspension rates higher than all students. Foster students in special education had higher rates than foster students in general education (16% vs. 10%), but both groups still had rates higher than those of all students.

Expulsion rates for foster students who are Hispanic, White, Black, and Two or More Races were higher than rates for all students (ranging from 0.3%-0.4% for foster students vs. 0.1% for all students). Rates were also higher for both female and male foster students, foster students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and foster students in general education and special education. See Table 3.

Table 3: Students in Foster Care - Discipline Disaggregated by Various Subgroups

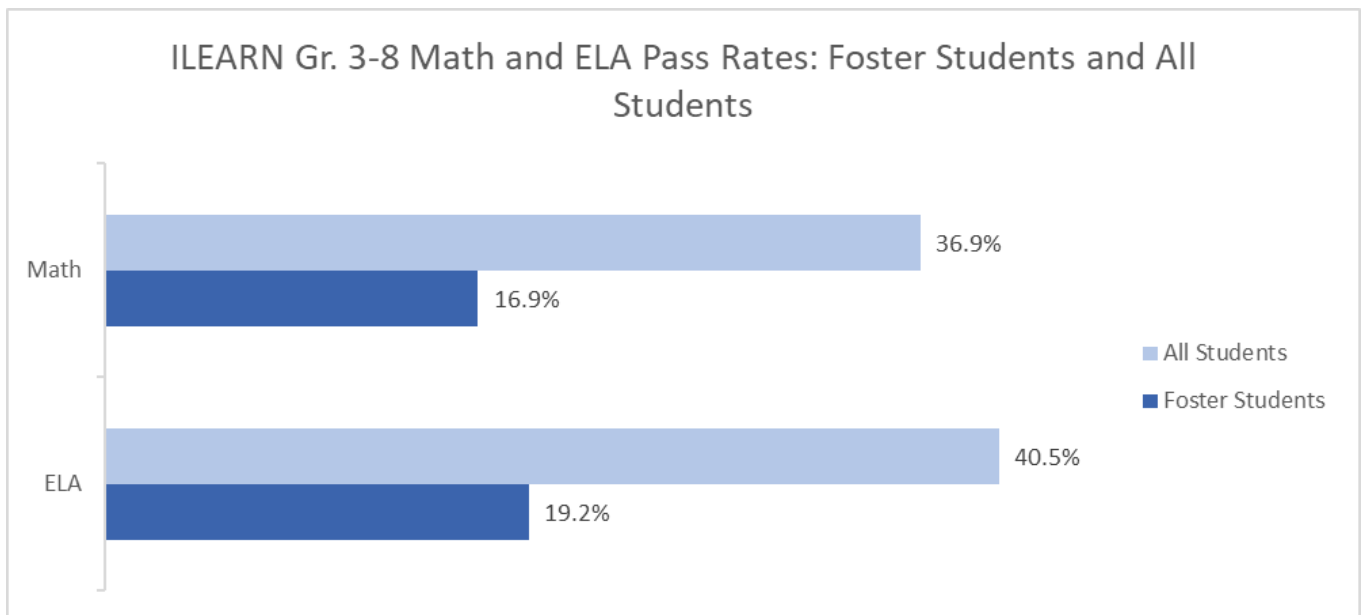
	Students Suspended (#)	Students Suspended (%)	Students Expelled (#)	Students Expelled (%)	Total Foster Students*
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian / Alaskan Native	6	15.0%	0	0.0%	40
Asian	2	5.4%	0	0.0%	37
Black	331	12.4%	9	0.3%	2,676
Hispanic	116	10.4%	5	0.4%	1,114
Native Hawaiian or	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11

Other Pacific Islander					
Two or More Races	161	12.7%	4	0.3%	1,265
White	1,113	11.9%	40	0.4%	9,327
Gender					
Female	568	8.1%	17	0.2%	6,974
Male	1,161	15.5%	41	0.5%	7,496
Other Populations					
Free/Reduced Lunch	1,588	14.3%	52	0.5%	11,141
Special Education	758	16.0%	14	0.3%	4,730
General Education	971	10.0%	44	0.5%	9,740

*Unique count of foster students enrolled at any time during 2020-2021.

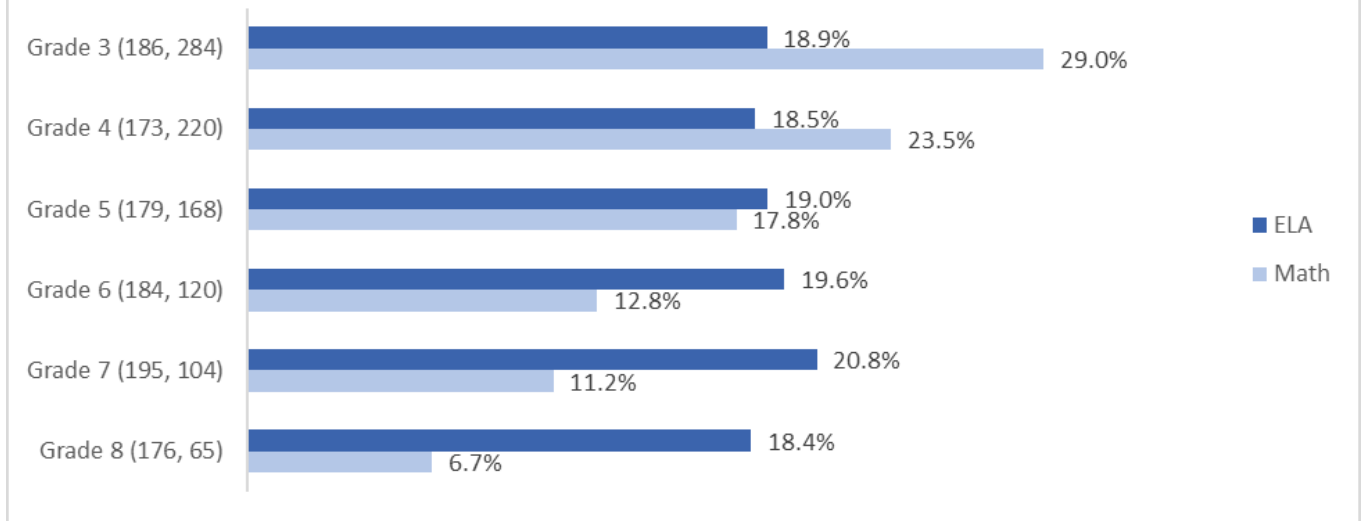
ILEARN English/Language Arts and Math (Grades 3-8)

Students in foster care who took the ILEARN assessment in grades 3-8 were two times less likely to pass either subject (ELA and math) than all students – overall, 19.2% of foster students (1,093 students of 5,698 tested) passed ELA compared to 40.5% of all students, and 16.9% of foster students (961 students of 5,692 tested) passed math, compared to 36.9% of all students.



By grade level, passing rates for foster students in ELA were roughly similar, ranging from a low of 18.4% passing in eighth grade to a high of 20.8% passing in seventh grade. In math, passing rates tended to decline as grades went up – foster students in third grade had the highest passing rate (29.0%), while only 6.7% of eighth graders passed.

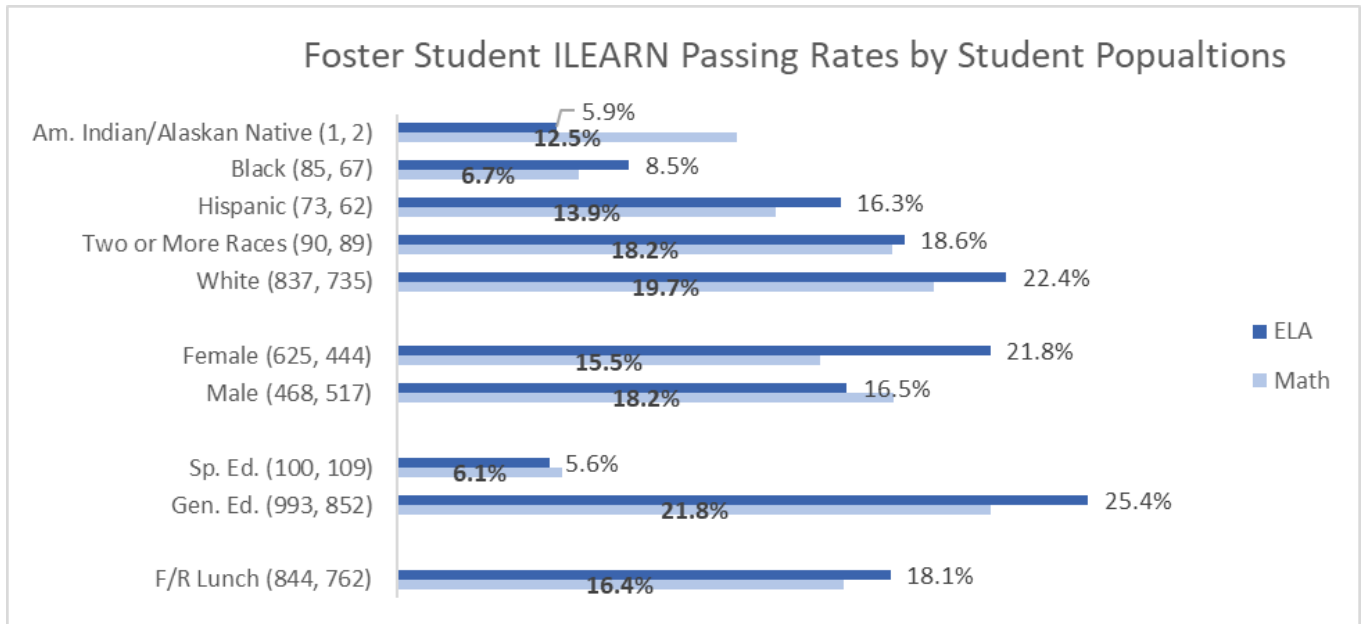
Foster Student ILEARN Passing Rates by Grade



(Numbers in parentheses represent number passing in ELA, math)

By race/ethnicity, all foster student populations had passing rates for ELA and math that were below the passing rate for all students in those subjects. American Indian/Alaskan Native foster students had the lowest passing rate in ELA (6%), while Black foster students had the lowest passing rate in math (6.7%). White students had the highest passing rates for both subjects (22.4% E/A and 19.7% math)⁶. Female foster students had higher ELA pass rates than male students (21.8% vs. 16.5%, respectively), while male foster students had higher math pass rates than females (18.2% vs. 15.5%, respectively). Just 6% of foster students in special education passed ELA or math.

Foster Student ILEARN Passing Rates by Student Populations

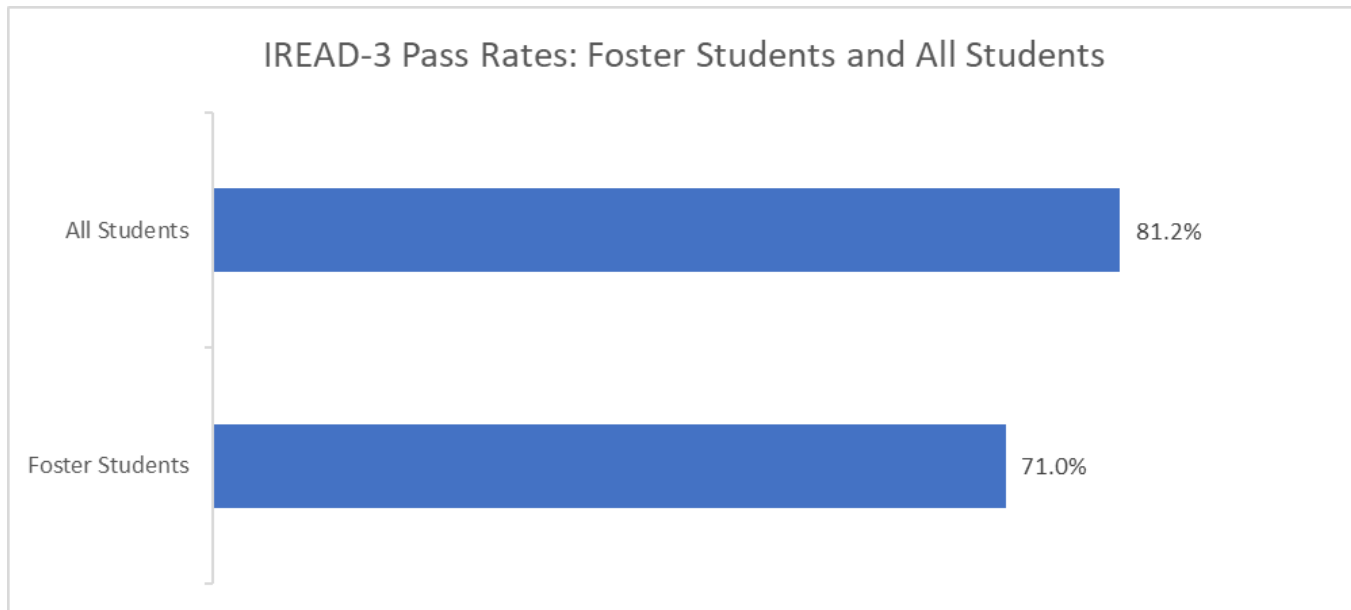


(Numbers in parentheses represent number passing in ELA, math)

⁶ Note that data is suppressed for the Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander student populations for privacy reasons due to small sizes and suppression rules.

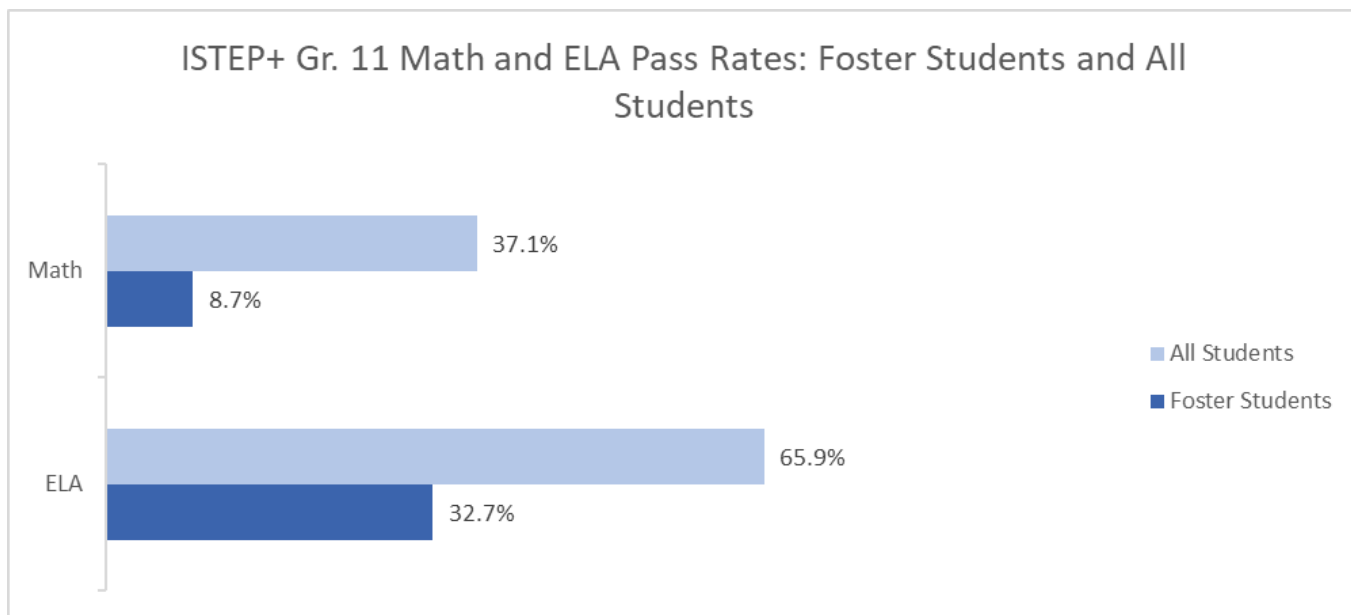
IREAD-3

Foster students passed the third grade literacy assessment (IREAD-3) at much lower rates than all students. 71.0% of foster students passed (713 of 1,004 tested), compared to 81.2% of all students.



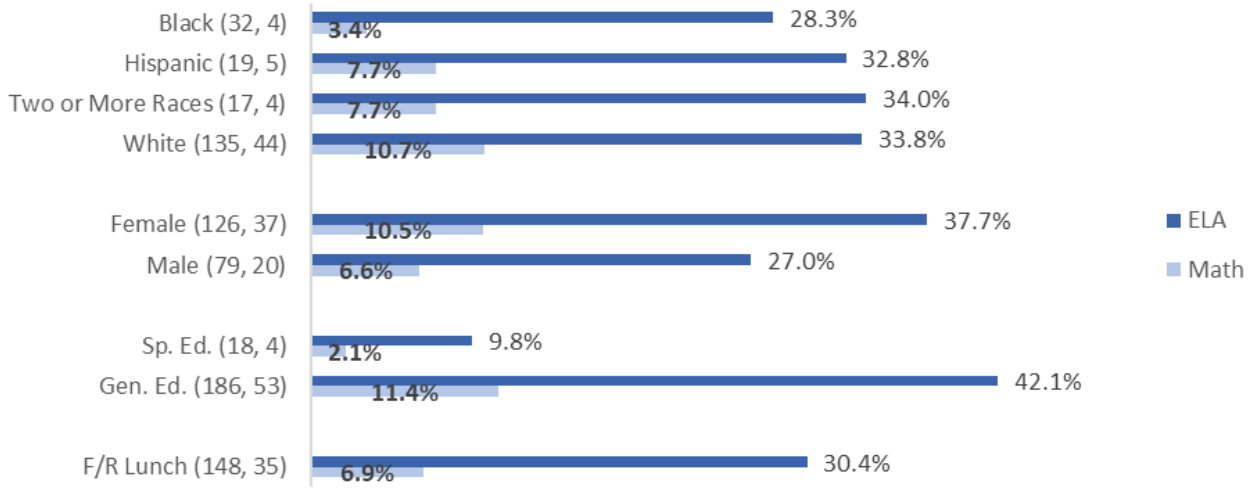
ISTEP+ Grade 11 (First Time)

Among foster students taking ISTEP+ for the first time in eleventh grade, 32.7% (205 of 627 students) passed ELA, and 8.7% (57 of 654 students) passed math. Pass rates for foster students in ELA were two times lower than rates for all students, and math passing rates were more than four times lower.



By race/ethnicity, all foster student populations had lower passing rates than all students. Black foster students had the lowest passing rates in both ELA (28.3%) and math (3.4%). Female foster students passed both ELA and math at rates higher than male foster students (37.7% vs. 27.0%, respectively, and 10.5% vs. 6.6%, respectively). Only 10% of foster students in special education passed ISTEP+ ELA, and 2% of them passed math.

Foster Student ISTEP+ Passing Rates by Student Populations



(Numbers in parentheses represent number passing in ELA, math)

Free and Reduced Lunch Program

Foster children are categorically eligible for free meal benefits per the USDA Food and Nutrition Services Eligibility Manual.

School Accountability Grades

Schools were not given accountability grades during the 2020-2021 school year.

Update on Foster Care Remediation Plan

In response to the feedback received through both the original stakeholder group created in 2018 per HEA 1134 and Foster Care Points of Contact (POC) from across the state, the previous remediation plan has been updated.

The local school corporation Foster Care POCs have been engaged in ongoing opportunities to provide feedback regarding goals, needs, and next steps for students in care. The following goals have been discussed at length and approved by stakeholders:

1. Encourage districts to enact positive discipline practices to prevent actions and deliver resources to districts that will reduce the suspension and expulsion of students in foster care.
2. Broaden and intensify services and supports offered to students in foster care in order to increase graduation.
3. Create and share a variety of targeted professional development resources specific to the role of Foster Care POC clarifying the expectations and responsibilities of the POC and the specific needs of foster youth.
4. Create a blueprint of communication and processes to help and support increased collaboration among foster youth, foster families, DCS education services, LEAs, and community-based service providers. Successful models of collaboration will then have the opportunity to be replicated across the state.

More specific information regarding these goals can be found [here](#).

IDOE continues to partner with agencies across the state, including the Indiana Department of Child Services, to ensure collaboration and commitment to help foster youth.