

Texas students in foster care: Results from data sharing between child welfare and education agencies



Laura Marra, MSW & Monica Faulkner, PhD, LMSW
School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin

Introduction

Sharing essential data across child welfare, education, and court systems is critical to the educational success of students in foster care. This study uses matched data from the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to provide the first statewide information about the reality of students in foster care. The state does not have an integrated data system and data is rarely shared between state agencies. Likewise, very little information is available to understand the reality of current youth in schools as this data is typically captured retrospectively. The Texas Blueprint Implementation Data Workgroup was established to assess the educational outcomes of students in care in Texas and charged with negotiating data exchange agreements and planning data components that would be shared.

Methods

All children and youth in foster care from August 31, 2011 through September 1, 2012 were pulled from the child welfare data system. Demographic information including names, date of births and social security numbers were sent via encrypted electronic files to the Texas Education Agency. Data was matched to all students enrolled in a Texas school during the 2012-2013 school year. A total of 23,326 foster students were identified. Basic descriptive statistics, t-tests and chi-square analyses were conducted as appropriate to compare the outcomes of foster youth to youth not in foster care..



Results

The percentage of students who attended 2 or more school in one school year (47%) was 6.5 times that of students not in care. In terms of special education, the percentage of students in foster care receiving special education services (24%) was 2.7 times that of students not in care (9%). Students in care (34%) were more often eligible for special education services for having an emotional disturbance (6%). Students in foster care also had higher rates of disciplinary action; they were 3.4 times more likely to receive an out of school suspension compared to your not in care. Texas has three diploma tracks: distinguished, recommended and minimum. Students in care (44%) were also much more likely to be on target to complete the minimum degree plan in comparison to students not in care (18%). Finally, students in care who left school during the academic year were more likely to be classified as “dropped out” (29%) compared to students not in care (8%).

[→Click here for Figures/Graphs](#)

Conclusions

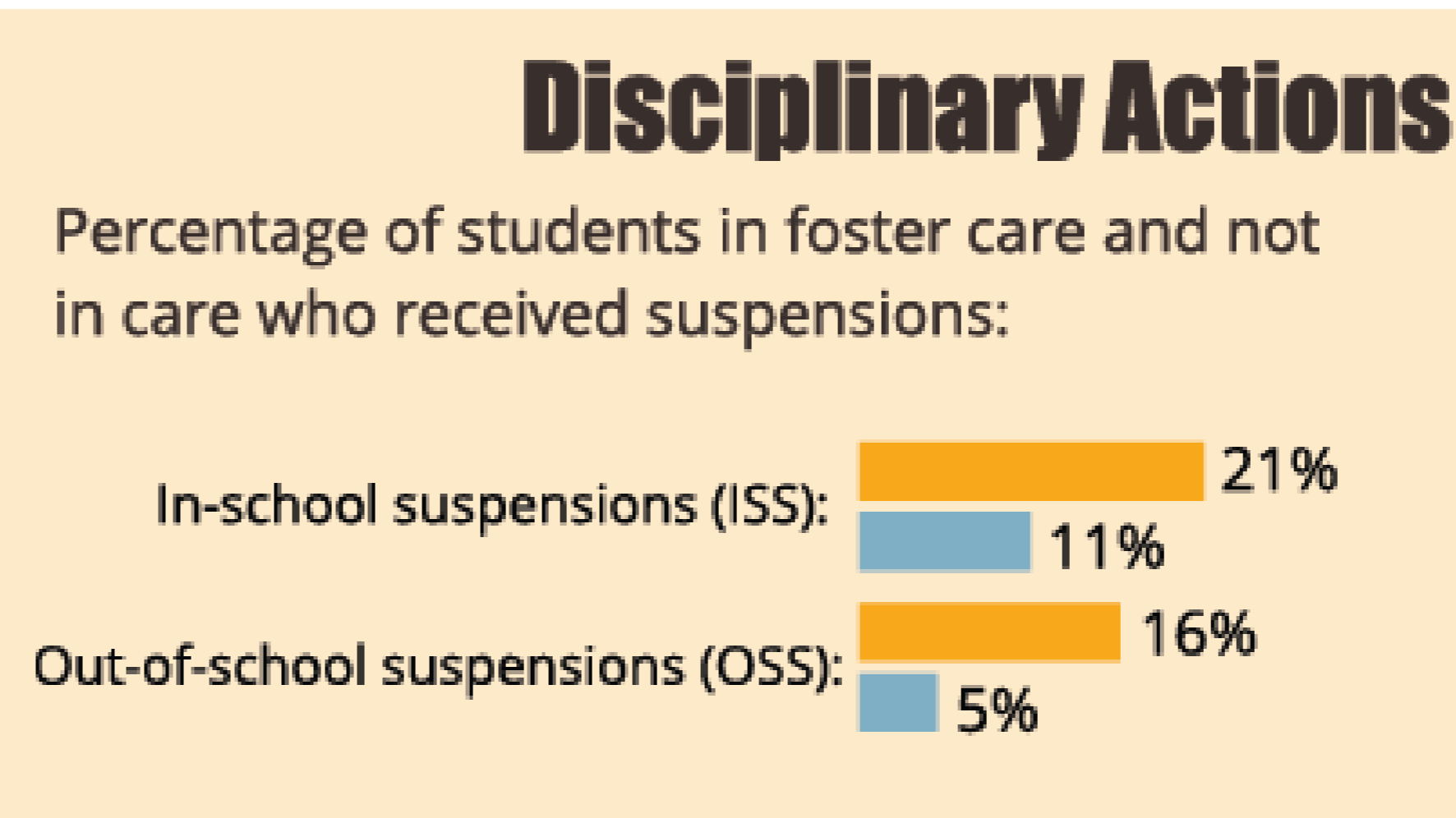
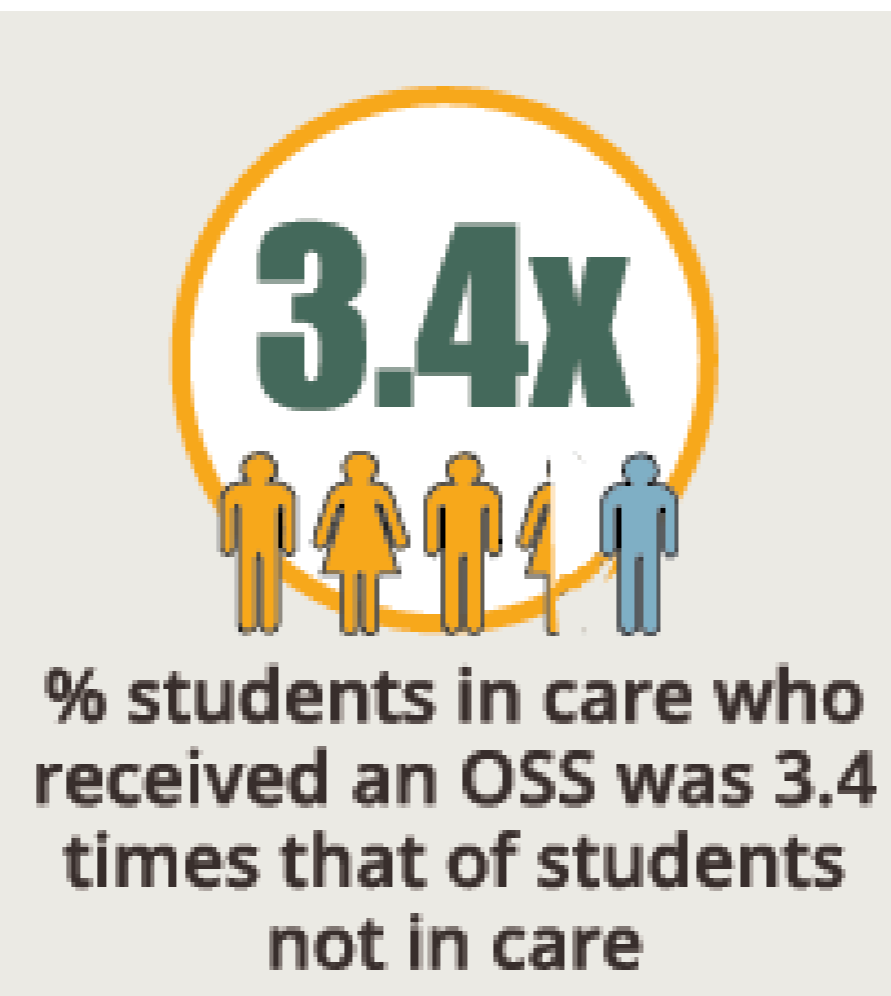
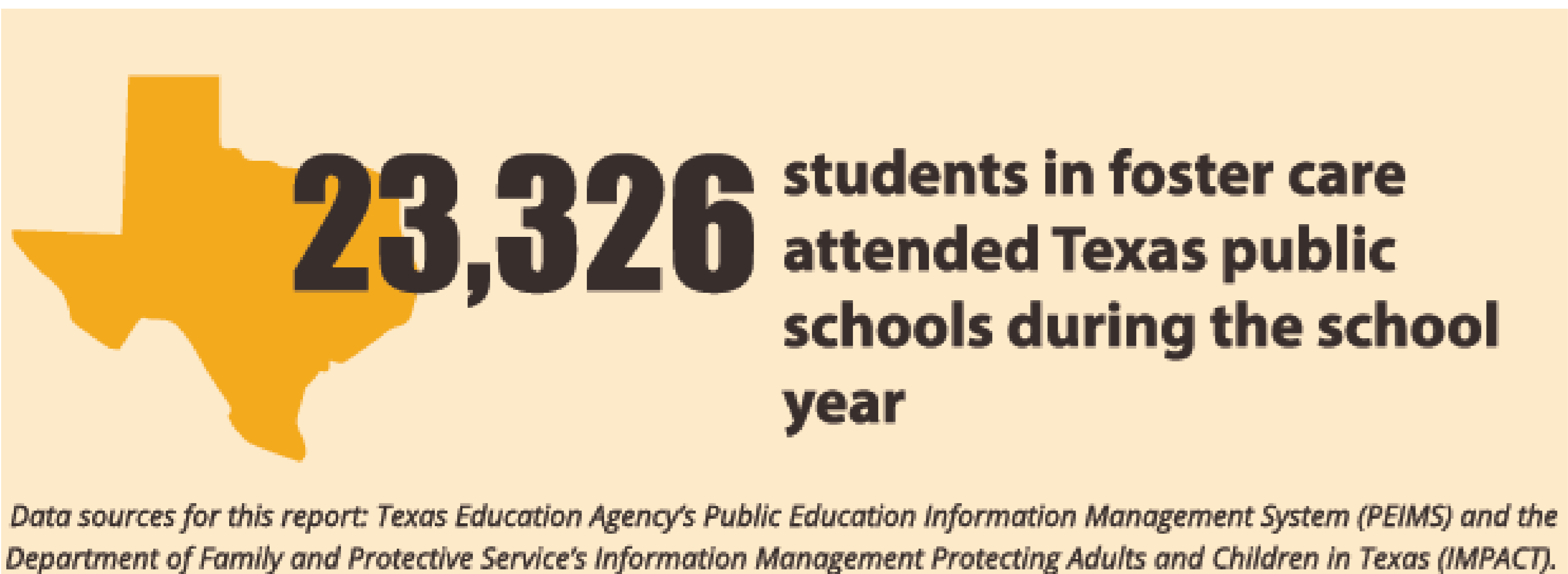
This data provides a baseline to understand the reality of youth in foster care. Although data was not released in a way that allowed for further analyses of the correlational relationships, findings suggest that students who are in foster care struggle academically. State entities should conduct these analyses on an annual basis and provide options for more sophisticated data analysis to identify ways to improve academic outcomes..



The University of Texas at Austin
Texas Institute for
Child & Family Wellbeing
School of Social Work

Texas students in foster care: Results from data sharing between child welfare and education agencies

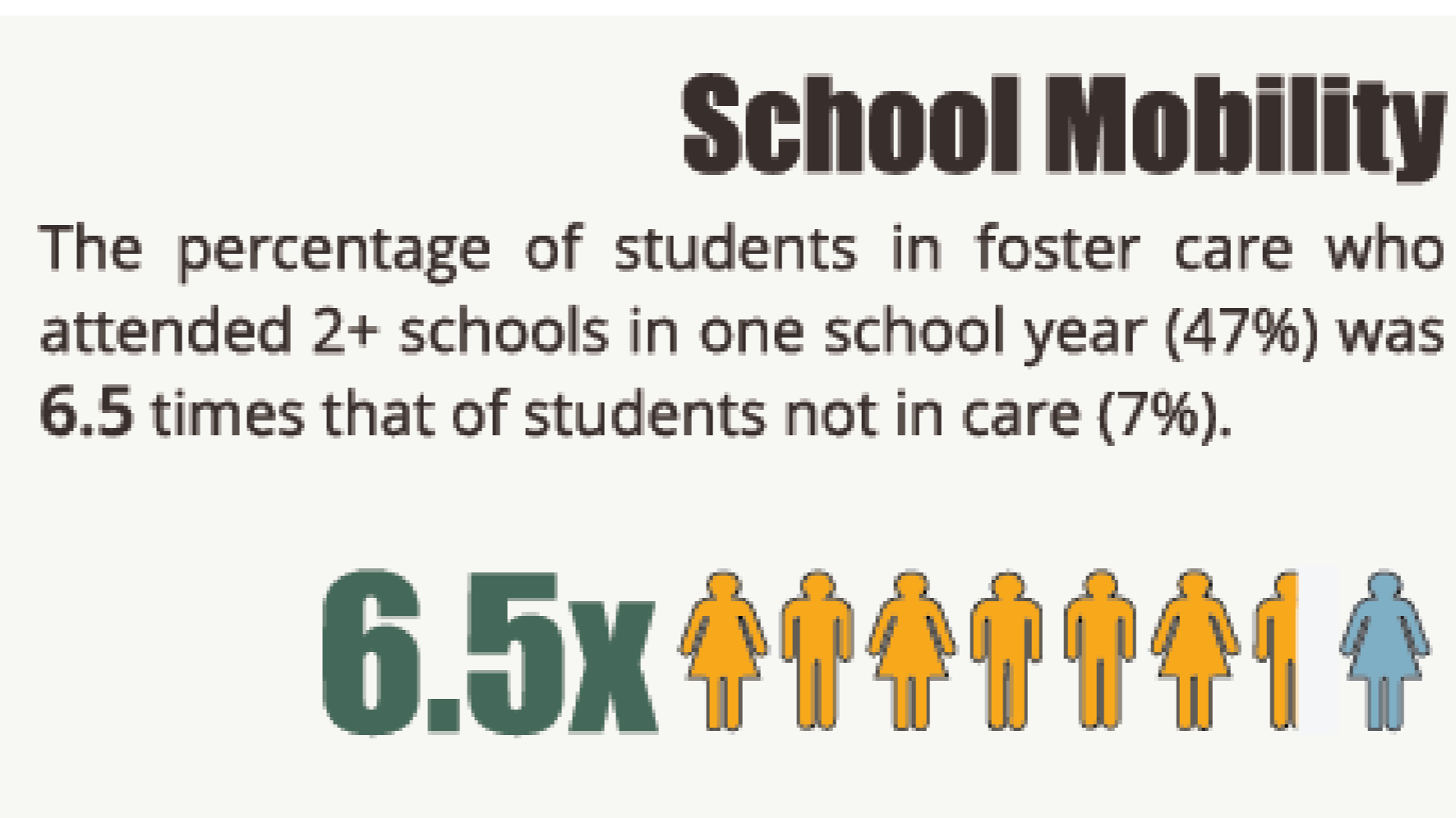
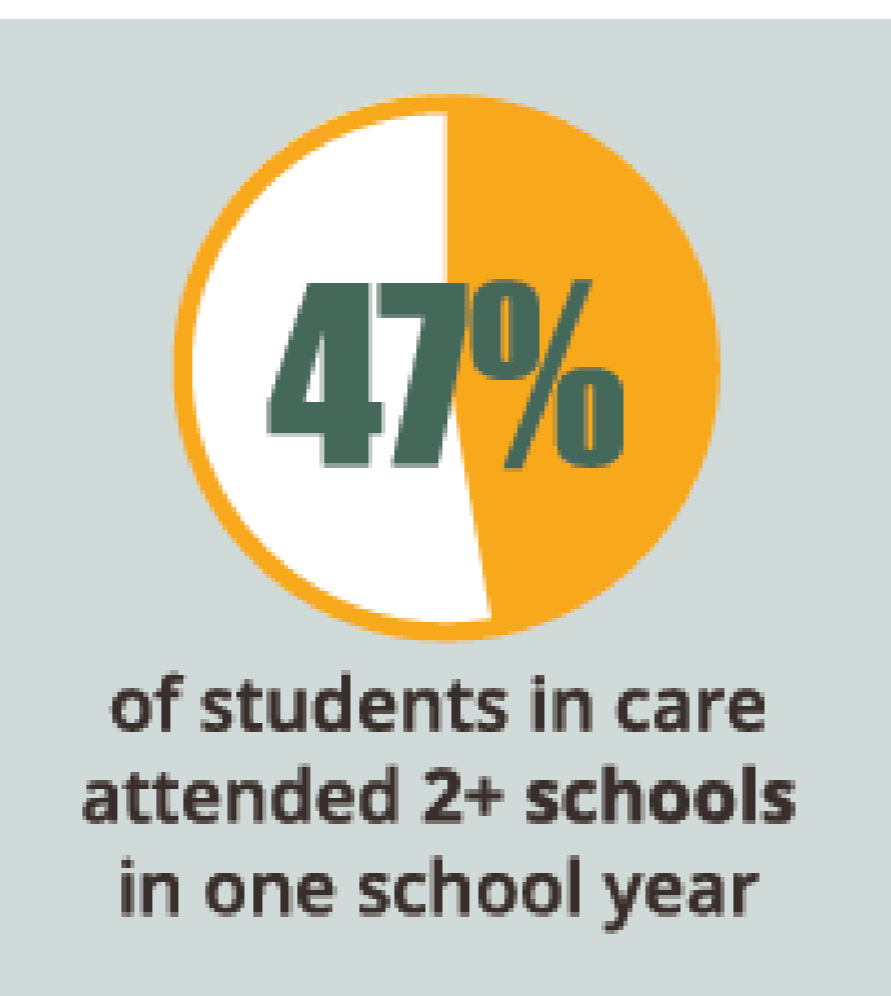
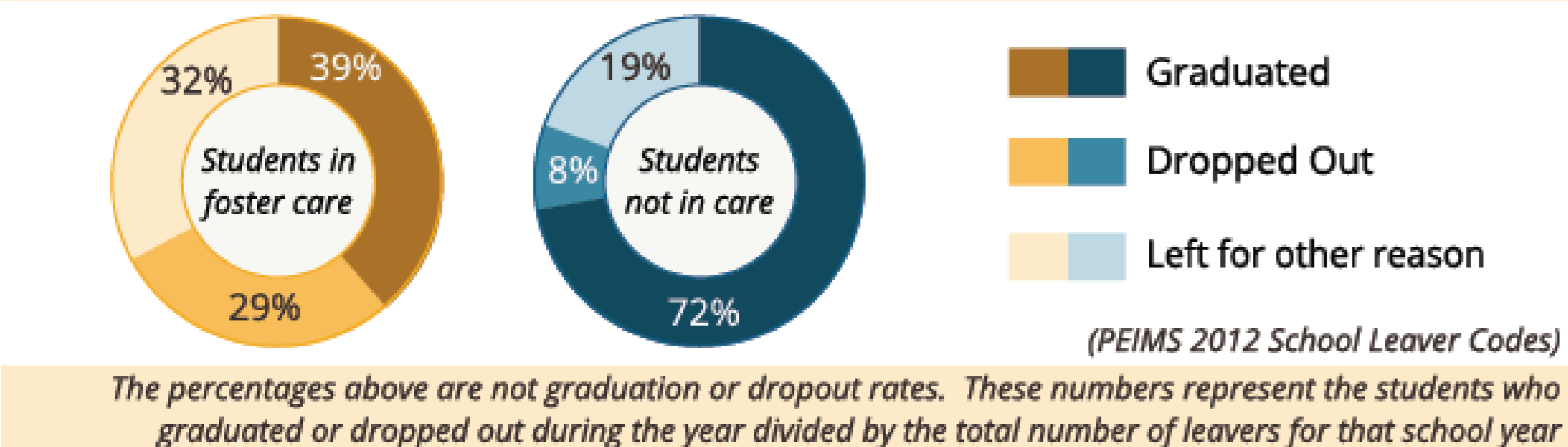
Laura Marra, MSW & Monica Faulkner, PhD, LMSW
 School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin



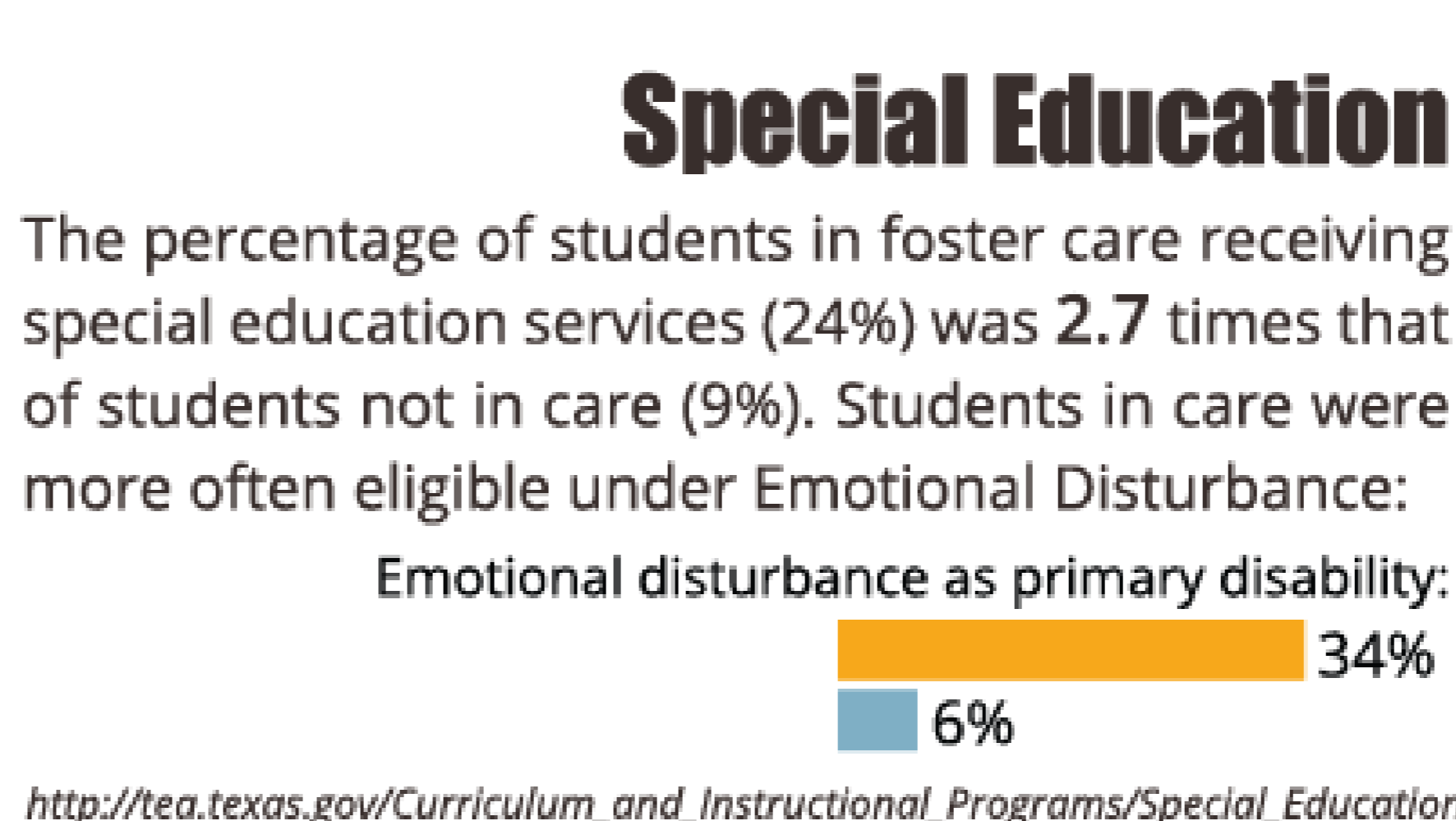
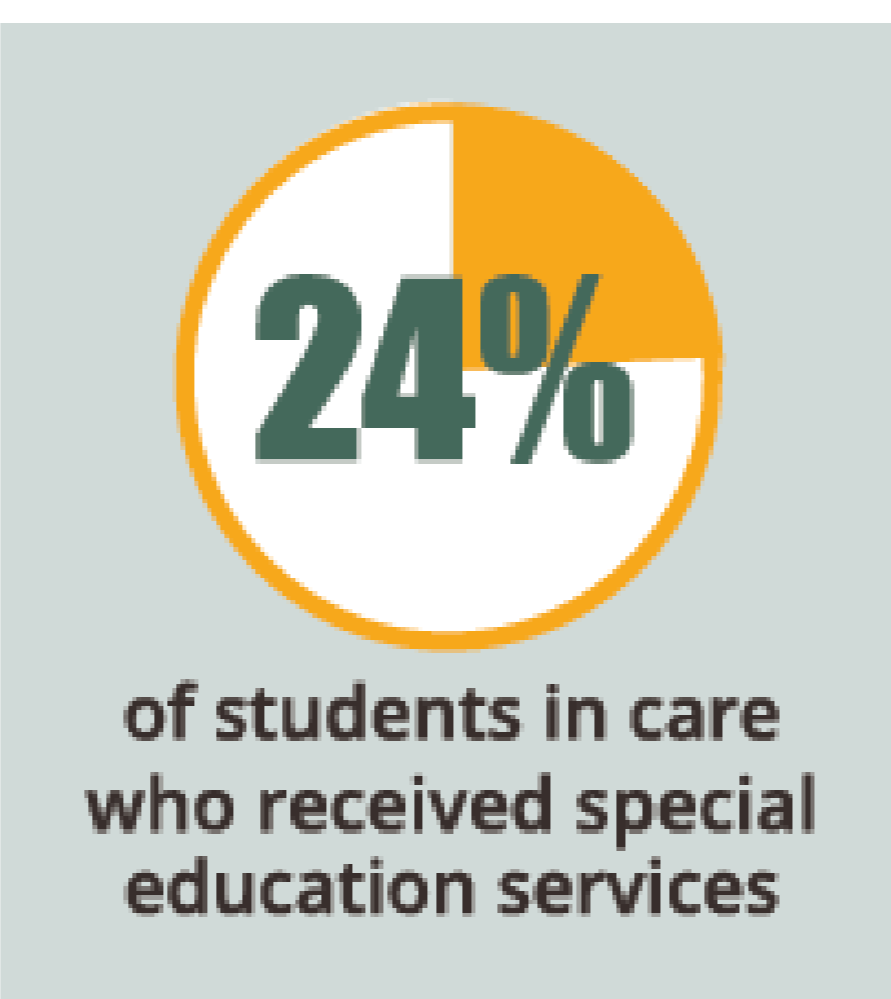
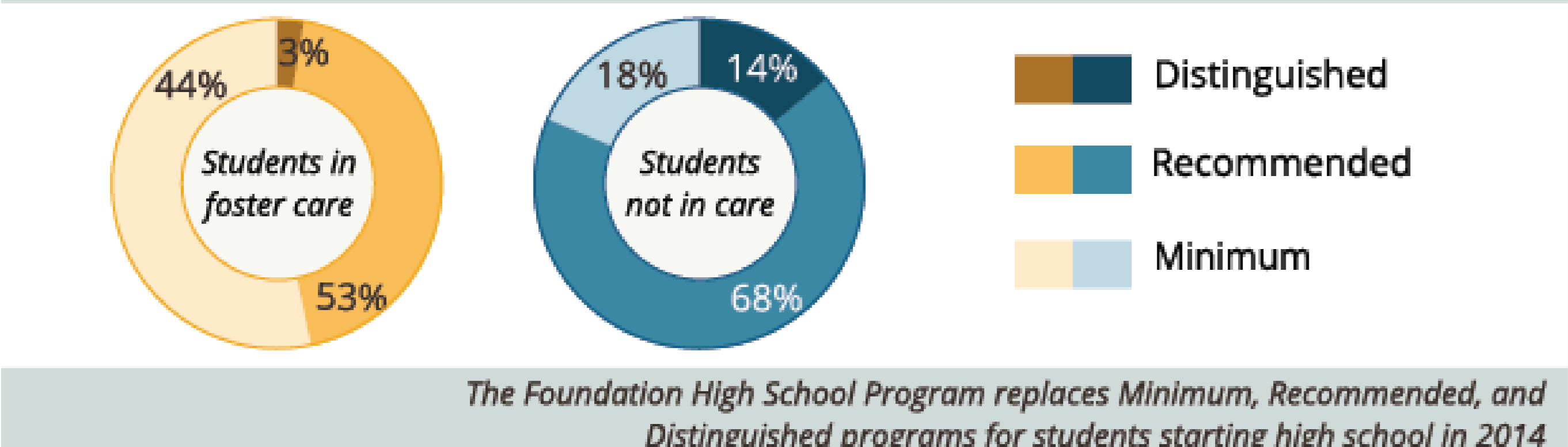
Results

The percentage of students who attended 2 or more school in one school year (47%) was 6.5 times that of students not in care. In terms of special education, the percentage of students in foster care receiving special education services (24%) was 2.7 times that of students not in care (9%). Students in care (34%) were more often eligible for special education services for having an emotional disturbance (6%). Students in foster care also had higher rates of disciplinary action; they were 3.4 times more likely to receive an out of school suspension compared to your not in care. Texas has three diploma tracks: distinguished, recommended and minimum. Students in care (44%) were also much more likely to be on target to complete the minimum degree plan in comparison to students not in care (18%). Finally, students in care who left school during the academic year were more likely to be classified as "dropped out" (29%) compared to students not in care (8%).

Dropout & Graduation Leavers



Graduation Program



Conclusions

This data provides a baseline to understand the reality of youth in foster care. Although data was not released in a way that allowed for further analyses of the correlational relationships, findings suggest that students who are in foster care struggle academically. State entities should conduct these analyses on an annual basis and provide options for more sophisticated data analysis to identify ways to improve academic outcomes..

Students in foster care Students not in care