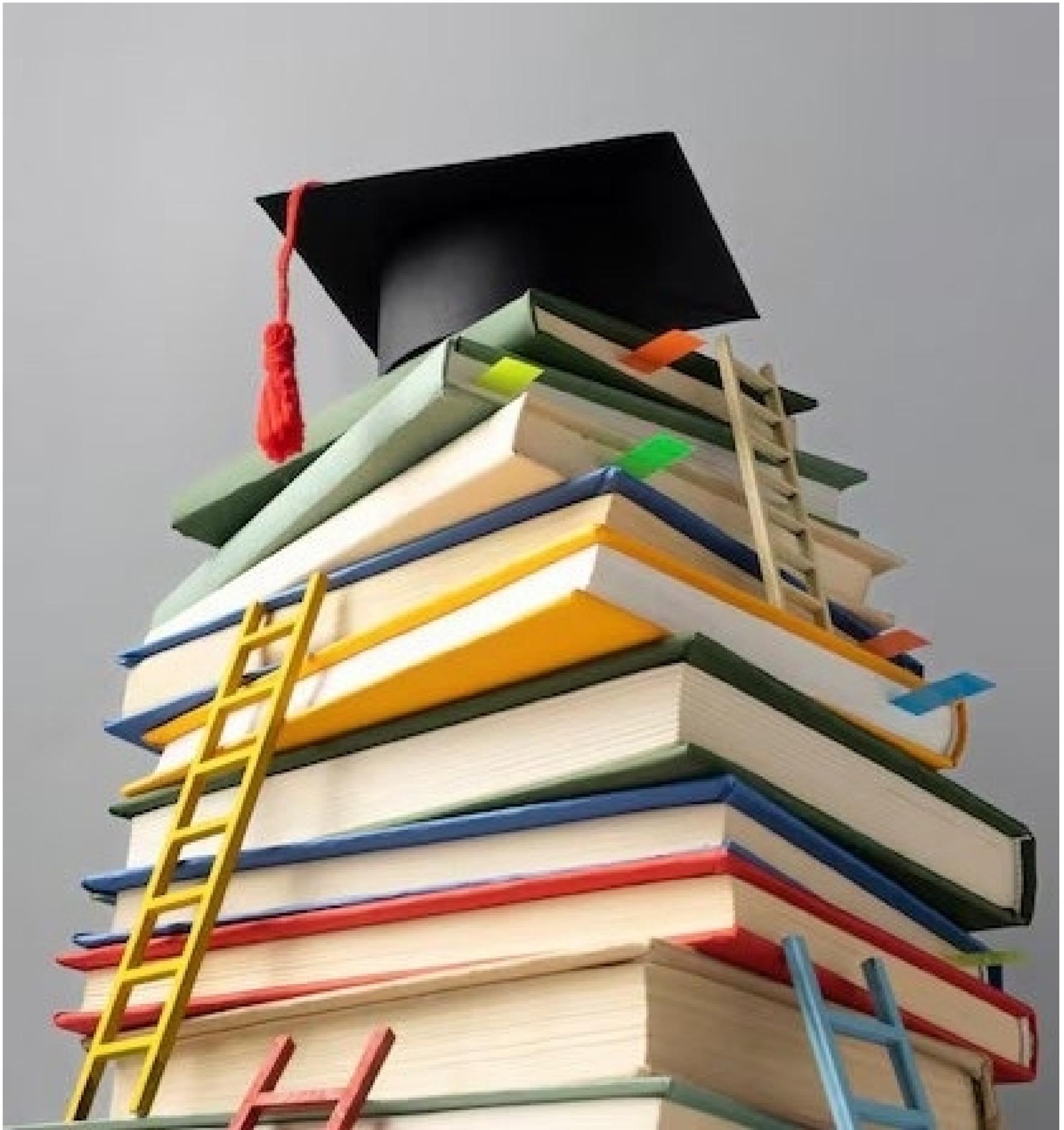**FRESNO COUNTY · SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

"Finding Balance: Navigating the Three C's- Challenges, Career, and College Exploration"

Rita Arakelyan - Education Services Specialist

Brenda Magaña- Education Services Specialist

Two Truths & A Mission?

- Tell us about yourself, what is your favorite food?
- One statement that reflects your personal mission in education or advocacy.

Bingo

Who we serve :

9-12TH Grades	→ Fresno County Schools →	Students who are facing homelessness or are in foster care

Challenges our students face:

- 41% less likely to graduate from high school
- 27% less likely to have a stable placement
- 43% chronic absenteeism rate

FOSTER & HOMELESS YOUTH EDUCATION SERVICES

SENIOR SERVICES DELIVERY MODEL

A Guide for Liaisons and Counselors

FRESNO COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher

01 Before Meeting Students

- FCSS Request Ward of the Court letter from Child Welfare Services or Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Verification letter from district liaison
- Request student(s) transcripts and provide transcript review
- Assist in determining Graduation Waiver eligibility or partial credits recovery

03 After Meeting Students

- FCSS will request any records discovered missing on student transcript and deliver to school registrar
- FCSS will provide a comprehensive spreadsheet of completed student services provided at each site to the liaison and school site counselor (if applicable)

02 While Meeting Students

- Review transcript, academic progress per A-G requirements/graduation requirements, and assist with partial credit recovery
- Provide iPlan Education Resource guide presentation
- Individual planning (college and career readiness/goals)
- Create FSA ID and complete FAFSA and college applications
- Assist with college support program applications (EOPS, EOP,RSP)
- Complete CHAFEE grant application, foster care eligibility certification forms and send to California Student Aid Commission (CSAC)
- Check college emails, complete required forms for Financial Aid, complete new student orientations, etc.

For inquiries or to request services: 559-265-4003 | fys@fcoe.org

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MEET OUR TEAM

TUMANI HEIGHTS
Director

AMANDA MEEKER
Lead Education Services Specialist

BRENDA MAGANA
Education Services Specialist

ASHLEY GARTIN
Education Services Specialist

CRYSTAL GOMEZ
Education Services Specialist

RITA ARAKELYAN
Education Services Specialist

ALEXANDRA CONTRERAS
Program Assistant

For inquiries or to request services:
559-265-4003
fys@fcoe.org

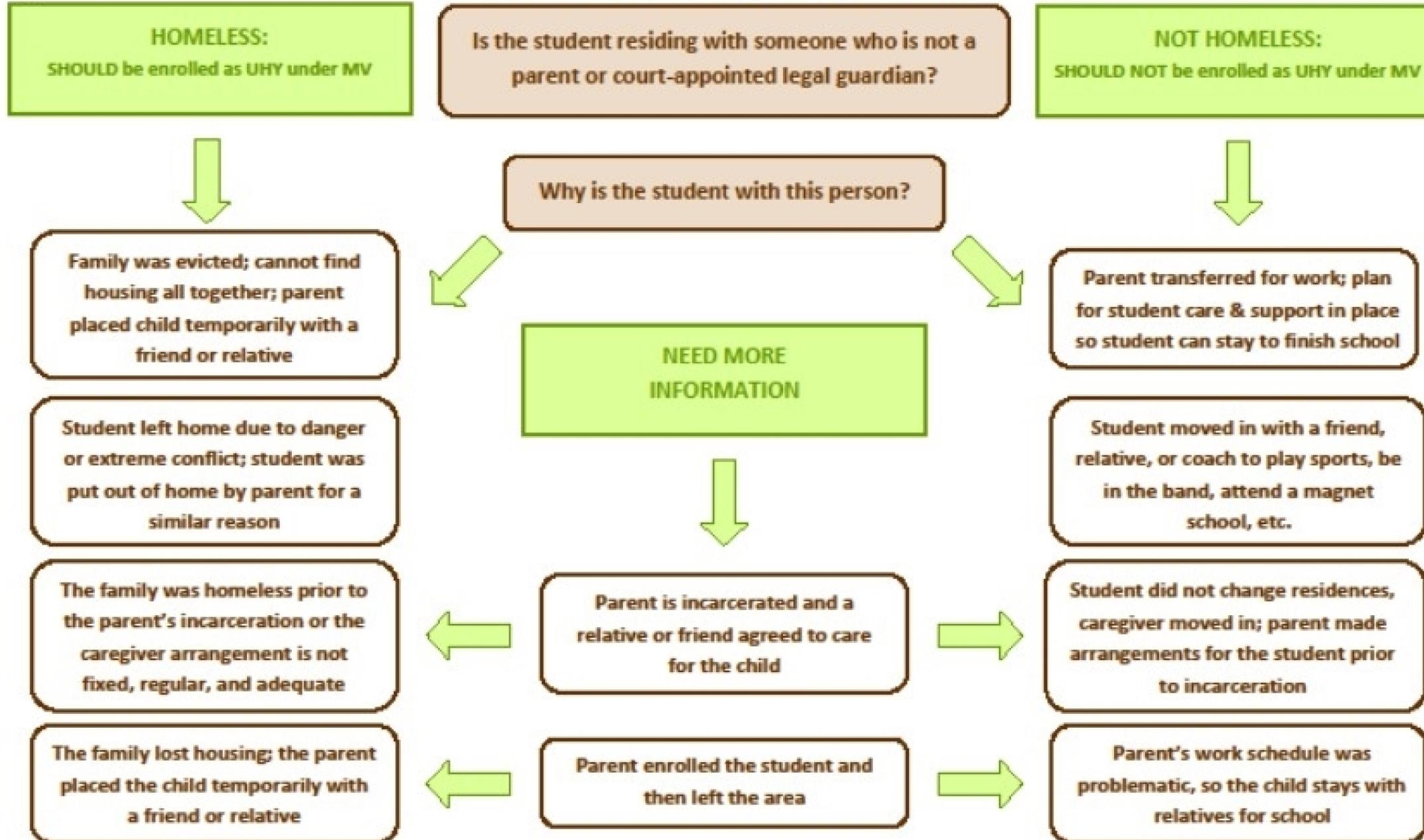# Homelessness Determination
Mckinney-Vento

Homelessness is a state in which individuals or families lack a <u>fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime</u>

Flowchart:

Homeless Unaccompanied Youth

Barriers: Youth may avoid identifying themselves as homeless due to

➤ Lack of understanding of the McKinney–Vento definition of homeless.

➤ Desire to avoid the stigma often associated with homelessness.

➤ Discomfort discussing the circumstances, which often are very personal and sensitive, that led to their being homeless and on their own.

➤ Fear of being treated differently by school personnel or other students if they are "found out".

➤ Fear of being reported to child welfare and/or law enforcement agencies.

Strategies to Help Identify Homeless Unaccompanied Youth (HUY)

✓ INCLUDE MCKINNEY- VENTO QUESTIONS IN THE LEA'S STANDARD ENROLLMENT PACKET. LEA TO PROVIDE MANDATORY HOUSING QUESTIONNAIRE UPON STUDENT ENROLLMENT.

✓ DEVELOP TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH BY CONDUCTING CONVERSATIONS IN A SENSITIVE AND CONFIDENTIAL MANNER. INFORM YOUTH OF CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH YOU ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT CONCERNS TO CHILD PROTECTIVE AGENCIES.

✓ WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS TO ASSIST WITH IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES.

Strategies to Help Identify
Homeless Unaccompanied Youth (HUY)

- ✓ DEVELOP YOUTH-FRIENDLY OUTREACH MATERIALS AND DISTRIBUTE THEM WHERE YOUTH ARE LIKELY TO SEE THEM.

- ✓ USE YOUTH-FRIENDLY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION (SOCIAL MEDIA, TEXT, WEBSITES).

- ✓ CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEER CONNECTION THAT NORMALIZE HELP-SEEKING AND INCREASE AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE SERVICES

- ✓ CREATE A WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

Educational Rights

Immediate Enrollment

- Even when lacking records normally required for enrollment.

- Even if having missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

- **Enrollment** is defined as "attending classes and participating fully in school activities".

School Stability

Right to attend School of Origin:
- The school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed, or
- The school in which the child or youth was last enrolled
- Includes public preschools (district-administered) and receiving schools
- Schools should presume that remaining in school of origin is in the best interest of the student.

School of Origin Transportation

- Transportation must be provided to and from the school of origin.
- Extends to public preschools and receiving schools.
- If student obtains permanent housing, the LEA must continue to provide school of origin transportation for the remainder of the academic year.

Dispute Resolution

When a dispute arises over **eligibility**, **school selection**, or **enrollment**
- Enrolled immediately in the requested school, pending final resolution of the dispute.
- Provided with a written explanation of any dispute-related decisions and right to appeal.
- Referred to the local liaison, who will carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

PARTIAL CREDITS

California's Partial Credit Model Policy provides recommendations and guidance for implementation of the partial credit mandate in law. This model policy was adopted by the Child Welfare Council in September 2013.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PARTIAL CREDITS?
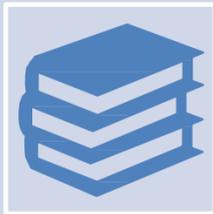
Ed. Code 51225.2

Ed Code 48645.5:

All students are entitled to Partial Credits

Education Planning & Transition Support Services

iPlan Education Resource Guide

fyes.fcoe.org

FAFSA/CADAA CHALLENGE
A California StatewideCampaign

- **GOAL:**

  To increase the number of homeless students who are prepared for success as they matriculate from high school into college by ensuring that they are accessing financial aid.

- **BACKGROUND:**

  Every year, billions of dollars in federal financial aid go unused because eligible students do not complete the FAFSA. According to the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), 64.2 percent of California's high school seniors in the class of 2024 completed the FAFSA or CADAA and this number increased to 72.7 percent in 2025. **Historically, students experiencing homelessness** have **completed the FAFSA or CADAA at a rate much lower than that of other high school seniors .**

- **PARTNERS:**

  Led by John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) in partnership with SchoolHouse Connection and the California Department of Education (CDE)

WINNERS FOR MEDIUM SIZE COUNTY!

Consecutive Years

Foster Youth Challenge

3rd Year Participating in Homeless Challenge

FAFSA COMPLETION RATE:

92%- the highest in the state of CALIFORNIA

7

DORM KIT PROJECT

Proceeds from winning the FAFSA Challenge used to provide essentials to students living on campus at colleges and universities including :

- **Sheets**
- **Comforter Sets**
- **Pillows**
- **Lamps**
- **Laundry Detergent**
- **Organizing Bins**
- **White Boards**

And other items that can help students transition to living on their own .
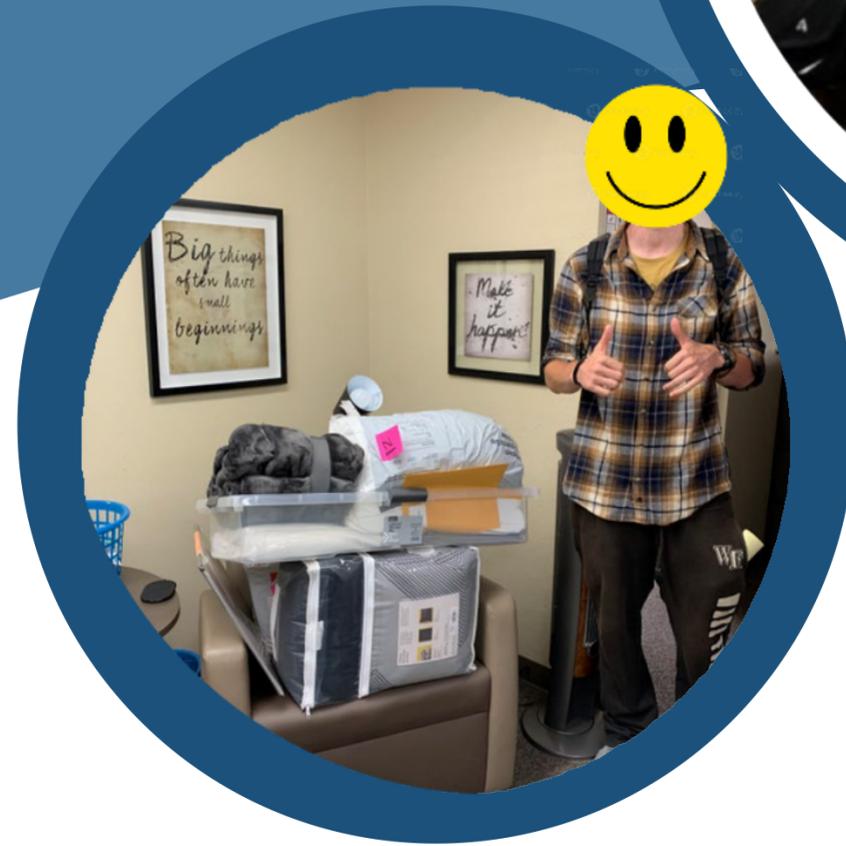
Education Matters: Fresno County program provides dorm kits for foster students | CBS47 and KSEE24 | News from YourCentralValley.com, Fresno CA
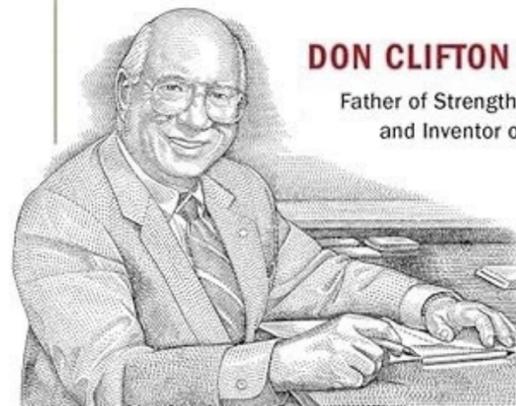
Dorm Kit Project

Strengths Based Leadership Academy

STRENGTHSFINDER 2.0
FROM GALLUP
and *Tom Rath*

Discover Your CliftonStrengths

DON CLIFTON
Father of Strengths Psychology
and Inventor of CliftonStrengths®

Includes the
CliftonStrengths®
assessment

Participant Assessment

YOUR LIFE
EXPERIENCES
WHO MADE YOU
WHO RAISED YOU

EXECUTING	INFLUENCING	RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING	STRATEGIC-THINKING
Achiever*	Activator	Adaptability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Developer	Context*
Belief	Communication	Connectedness	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Deliberative	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-Assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner*
Responsibility	Woo	Positivity	Strategic*
Restorative		Relator*	

34 | 5

Objectives

1. **Support school engagement,**
   specifically around attending school

2. **Empower**
   by furthering leadership skills

3. **Nurture**
   each student's unique strengths

4. **Cultivate self - reflection**

5. **Emphasize the significance of personal experiences**

FCSS Leadership Academy Overview

*Six Fresno County School Districts: *135 students attended our October 2025 session. 63 McKinney-Vento students and 72 foster youth*

*Five high school cohorts & five middle school cohorts

*Meet four times per year: October, November, February, April

*Leadership Academy Student Celebration: Takes place in May

Facilitators: Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Foster & Homeless Youth Services Department & Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Safe & Healthy Kids Program

- *All facilitators are Gallup Strengths Certified Coaches*

Location:

SCOUT ISLAND
Outdoor Education Facility

What do we want our students to walk away with?

The belief that they are unique and like everyone else, have something remarkable to contribute to this world.

Student feedback

Student: "It was a great experience! I truly felt I learned about myself in a unique way and I will take those lessons with me in life. It was a lot of fun to bond as a group. I felt really connected to the people around me, and it was a welcoming environment. I learned a lot about myself and I'm really happy I went."

Student K: "This was the best workshop I've attended during my time here in ____ district. I often don't attend events, they just aren't my thing. This workshop was different because I have never considered what my strengths were, in fact, I am often told how I am lacking in something not why I matter. People mean well but when they find out you have life experiences that are challenging, they talk to you from a place of deficit. Yes, my life is hard, but I am valuable, and I can offer the world a lot. I am so thankful I got to attend and would invite everyone to be as lucky as I am. "
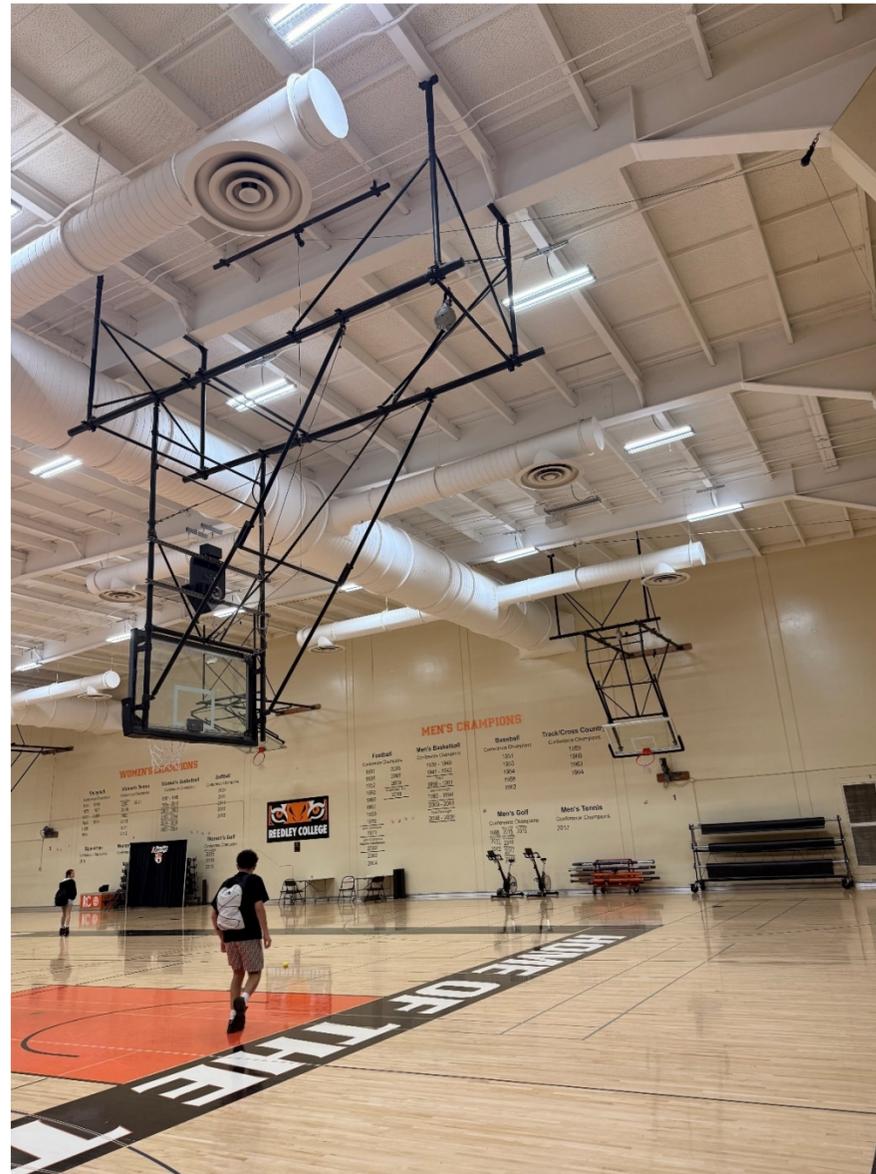
ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION (A2HE)

A day where high school students tour a partner, local college campus, such as Reedley College, to meet with resource programs like NextUP, EOPS, and college academic counselors, learn about majors and education programs offered at the campus, participate in fun activities.
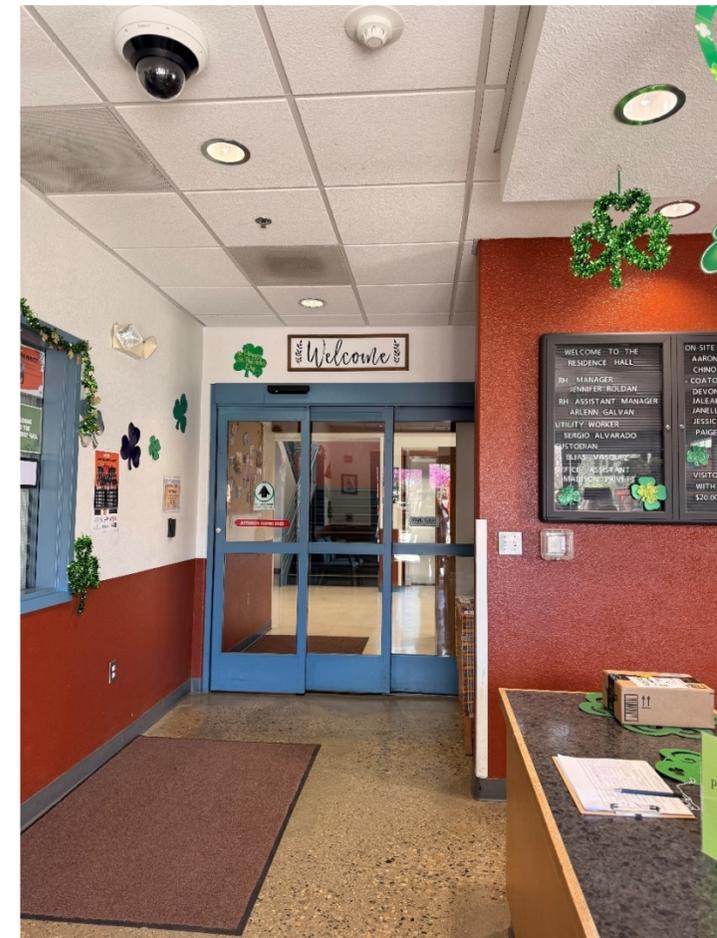
ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION (A2HE)

EXTREME REGISTRATION

A campus experience for high school seniors at our partner college, Fresno City College, where students connect with key support programs such as NextUP and EOPS, meet with academic counselors, explore majors and educational opportunities, participate in engaging activities, and register for fall courses.

The goal is to support students in completing the full community college matriculation process, recognizing that college applications and enrollment steps can feel overwhelming for many students.

Fresno City College

Learning from instructors

Fire Tech Program

Information

Expose our youth to college campuses and possible career paths

Lunchtime activities

Learning about Support Programs

NIC-A Networked Improvement Community

- Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) function as collaborative action network that follows a structured improvement process. Fresno C2C NICs are intentionally built from the ground up, making sure that everyone who can influence a challenge is involved from every level and layer.

- The Foster & Homeless Youth Networked Improvement Community brings together schools, the Department of Social Services, the Juvenile Dependency Court, and multiple community-based organizations to collaboratively work on literacy improvement for K-12th grades.
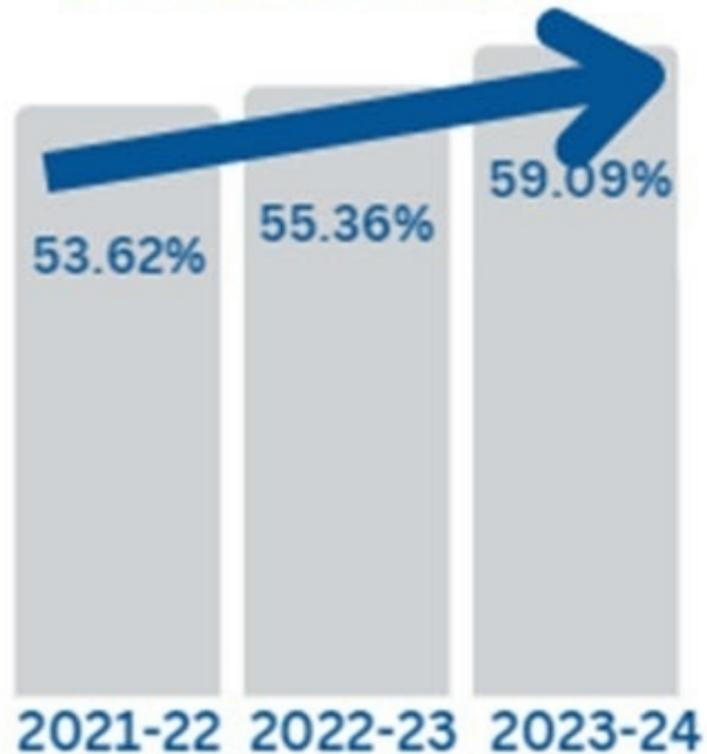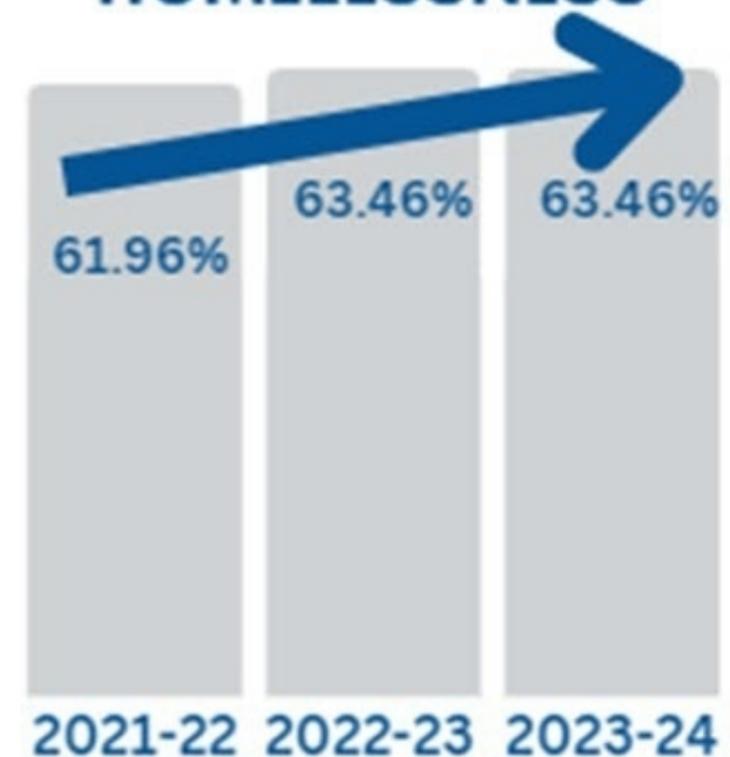

Framework for Improvement

Psychology of Change
EQUITY

Understand our Current System	Develop a Theory of Improvement	Learn by Doing	Sustain and Spread
• Data Study • User Voice • Causal Analysis • Problem of Practice	• Aim • Driver • Change Ideas	• PDSA Cycles • Measurement	• Implementation Plan • Communication Process • Quality Control

Foundation for Improvement

User-Centered Improvement Mindsets Adaptive Leadership

Data Snapshot

WE CONTINUE INCREASING GRADUATION RATES

STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

- 53.62% — 2021-22
- 55.36% — 2022-23
- 59.09% — 2023-24

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

- 61.96% — 2021-22
- 63.46% — 2022-23
- 63.46% — 2023-24

23-24 Data source: DataQuest

Data Snapshot

We Continue to Work on Stability

Foster Youth
- 60.2% (2021-22)
- 61% (2022-23)
- 59.06% (2023-24)

Homeless Youth
- 61.08% (2021-22)
- 63.02% (2022-23)
- 62.09% (2023-24)

■ 2021-22   ■ 2022-23   ■ 2023-24
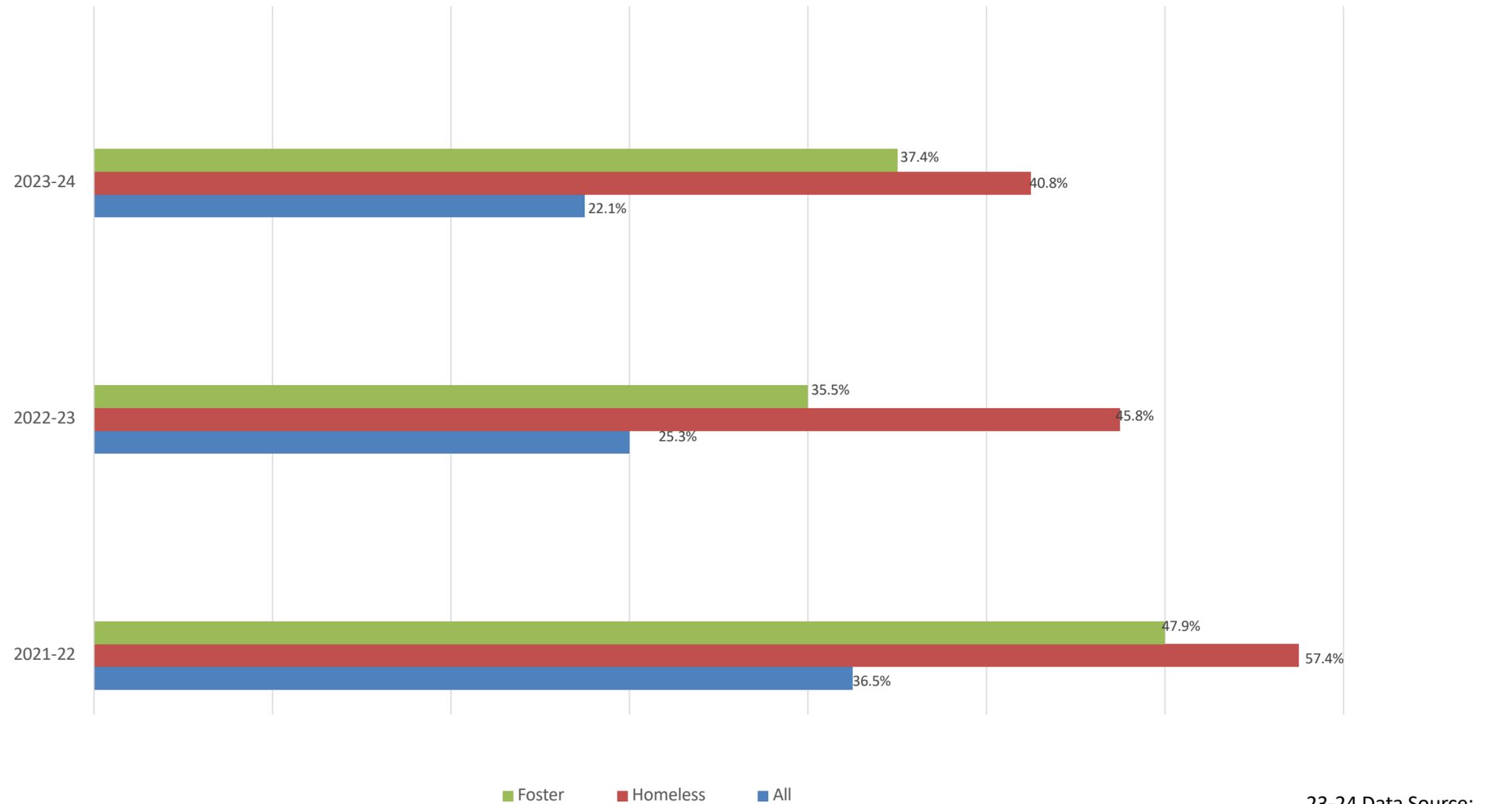
23-24 Data Source:
DataQuest

Intentional Leveraging of Resources

If you all could turn to your neighbor or talk amongst small groups and discuss any valuable information or tools you have gained here today and what new implementations you'd like to practice at your school, or within your district.

How We Fund These Services

FYSCP Funds-Foster Youth Services Coordinator Program Funds

Title IV Funds

EHCY-Education for Homeless Children Youth Grant

These are California funded grants