



COLORADO
Department of Education

Educational Stability Grant Program Annual Evaluation Report

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**Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado House Education Committee
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This report was prepared in accordance with section The Educational Stability Grant Program legislation, C.R.S 22-320138.5, by the following staff from the Colorado Department of Education's Office of Student Support:

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Executive Summary

The Educational Stability Grant (ESG) program, authorized by House Bill 18-1306, provides grant money for academic and social-emotional services and supports for highly mobile students. This includes students who experience (or are at risk of experiencing) multiple school moves during their K-12 education outside of regular grade transitions (e.g., youth in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and migrant students). Per section 22-32-138.5, C.R.S., the program's approach maintains that, by removing educational barriers and supporting educational stability, students served will stay in school, maintain regular attendance, decrease behavioral incidents, and make progress toward graduation or completion.

Ten applicants were selected for a three-year grant award, totaling \$805,662 in Year 1 and \$827,664 in Year 2. Funds are annually appropriated to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for the purpose of making grants available to eligible applicants and are managed by the Office of Student Support. The focus of this report is Year 2 of the grant (2020-2021).

Nearly 3,500 Students Served

In the 2020-2021 ESG program, 10 grantees reported serving 3,489 students:

- Grantees reported serving a total of **2,417 students experiencing homelessness** (69.3 percent of students served). This represents 22.0 percent of homeless student pupil membership in Colorado in 2020-2021 and a 3.4 percentage point increase from the percentage of students experiencing homelessness served in 2019-2020 (which is a statistically significant increase).
- Eight out of 10 grantees reported serving a total of **300 students in foster care or out-of-home placement** (8.6 percent of students served). This represents 31.8 percent of students in foster care in Colorado in 2020-2021 and a 23.2 percentage point increase from the percentage of foster students served in 2019-2020 (which is a statistically significant increase).
- Seven out of 10 grantees reported serving a total of **874 migrant students** (25.1 percent of students served). This represents 30.9 percent of migrant student pupil membership in Colorado in 2020-2021 and a 2.4 percentage point decrease from the percentage of migrant students served in 2019-2020 (which is within expected year-to-year variation).

Of note: Categories are not mutually exclusive, so a student could be counted in more than one category. All student pupil membership statistics were gleaned from the 2020-2021 Student October count.

In addition, about **half** (51.4 percent) of **students served were male** and **most were Hispanic** (64.1 percent of students; 29.9 percentage points higher than the state average) **or White** (24.3 percent of students). Most students served were in **kindergarten through fifth grade** (43.5 percent of students) followed by **ninth through 12th grade** (31.3 percent of students), **sixth through eighth grade** (21.9 percent of students), and **prekindergarten** (3.3 percent of students).

The ESG program funded **innovative services and supports to address barriers to learning** for highly mobile students. All grantees reported supporting students' academic progression and course completion, and nearly all reported supporting students through assessment of educational milestones and/or credit accrual and attainment. ESG also funds a variety of **structured academic opportunities for students to achieve their goal for high school graduation and postsecondary success** based on the individual student's academic interest and unique needs. For example, nearly all grantees reported providing opportunities for students to build on



strengths and talents and explore interests, as well as providing complete and up-to-date career and/or academic plans.

Grantees were asked to report on the **most effective strategies** that have positively impacted their programs. These included:

- increasing connectedness with students and families
- providing academic supports to students
- meeting essential needs
- increasing community engagement
- supporting/identifying dedicated program staff for the identification and support of highly mobile students
- implementing flexible programming to meet individual student needs

ESG grantees faced unique barriers in this second year of the grant program. In the first year, grantees indicated they were making significant progress prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, but progress was disrupted when schools transitioned to remote learning. This was evident in the 2020-2021 school year (which was largely remote for many grantees) as well, as ESG funded districts saw lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates than the previous year. Importantly, **despite the pandemic, graduation rates were higher and dropout rates generally lower for ESG funded districts than for at-risk populations overall.** Truancy rates for students served by the grant were comparable with state rates for highly mobile students, except for the rates among migrant students, which were higher. Given that ESG migrant student dropout rates remained low, however, it is likely that this reflected difficulties with access to online learning in these largely rural districts rather than a lack of motivation to engage in school.

The ESG Program Met Legislative Intent

The legislative intent of the ESG program is to improve educational stability as measured by increased school attendance, reduced behavioral and discipline incidents, increased grade-level promotion, reduced dropout rate, and increased graduation and completion rates for the grant recipients' schools. Evaluation results verify that the legislative intent of the ESG program was met. Grantees reported that, of the students served in 2020-2021 who enrolled in a Colorado school in 2020-2021, **94.1 percent transitioned to the next grade-level. Eighty-four percent of students served experienced positive outcomes**, such as school completion and continuation of education within the same school district.

Data collection was significantly interrupted due to COVID-19. However, when data were available, **nearly all grantees reported making progress on, meeting, or exceeding** their program's **academic improvement objectives** (six out of 10 grantees), **school attendance objectives** (four out of 10 grantees), and **behavioral objectives** (eight out of 10 grantees).

Grantees were asked to specifically describe special circumstances that positively affected progress on achieving program objectives. Program success was attributed to the following factors:

- dedicated program staff or team focused on providing supports to students (e.g., interventionist, specialist, mentors, liaisons, and youth advocates)
- a focus on identifying students in need of services
- cross team collaboration and partnerships within and outside of the district
- flexibility in programming for students with special circumstances

Impact of COVID-19 on ESG Programs



Grantees were also asked to specifically describe circumstances that negatively affected progress on achieving program objectives. **Program disruptions due to COVID-19 and remote learning** were the most cited challenges with program implementation and achieving program goals in 2020-2021. Grantees cited that highly mobile students were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due **to lack of basic needs being met, limited access to the internet/WIFI, and increased or changed responsibilities at home**. Difficulty with implementing traditionally in-person services in a virtual setting and **difficulty reaching highly mobile students** and their families were also cited as program implementation challenges. Other challenges mentioned included **staff turnover** and the amount of time required to fill positions during the pandemic. Grantees also voiced concerns on the **impact that COVID-19 will continue to have on students**, including on school connectedness, future academic performance, and attendance.

In general, grantees were successfully implementing programming and making progress on their program goals prior to March 2020. Since the beginning of the pandemic, grantees have **continually adapted programming** to build on this progress despite an ever-changing learning landscape. Several grantees take a **whole child approach** in individual work with students and families when addressing academic, attendance, and behavioral goals. This approach allows grantees and students to address concerns individually.

Many **successes** were also reported as many grantees were able to adapt programming to focus more on **filling immediate needs and building positive relationships with students and families**. Grantees maintained and adapted services to the greatest extent possible during this unprecedented year of remote and hybrid learning. Grantees provided direct student services (e.g., check-in calls and virtual visits, using multiple means to track down students, and continued one-on-one support to address individual needs). Additionally, **strong collaborative partnerships** both in and out of school were developed in response to the pandemic with the purpose of better serving highly mobile students. Some grantees reported that the additional challenges associated with maintaining contact in this difficult year led to **programmatic changes that will continue to have positive effects on future service delivery**.

The COVID-19 crisis caused a delay in grantees collecting and reporting data for year two of the grant. The flexibility of reporting timelines resulted in a delay in the report submission to the legislature. The data collection process and timeline for the year three report is on track to being submitted by the deadline.

"This is an amazing grant. I feel so happy that kids who have always gotten the short stick in life, so to speak, are directly benefited from this grant. The experiences and living conditions that the students served by this grant have gone through and continue to go through are truly harrowing. It's incredible to be in the position to have the resources to see what these students need on a day to day basis, and be able to get them what they need and support them in whatever ways are appropriate."

- Submitted by a grantee in a remote area



Introduction

A highly mobile student is defined as a student who experiences (or is at risk of experiencing) multiple school moves during their K-12 education outside of regular grade promotion. Per legislative mandate, this includes youth in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and migrant students. School instability is linked to several negative consequences such as stress, lower test scores, four to six months of education loss with each move, loss of credits/coursework, and loss of peer groups and relationships with trusted adults.¹⁻⁵ Due to school instability, highly mobile students are more likely to experience lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates, and tend to be disproportionately represented in disciplinary actions.²⁻¹⁰ Colorado data trends show that highly mobile students continue to experience lower graduation rates and completion rates as well as higher dropout rates compared to their peers.¹⁰

The ESG Program

In 2018, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 18-1306 Concerning Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Out-of-Home Placement. The purpose of this law is to remove educational barriers and support educational stability through the creation of the Educational Stability Grant (ESG) Program. The intent of the grant program is to provide academic and social-emotional services and supports to highly mobile students. The desired outcomes of the program include improving school attendance, reducing behavioral and discipline incidents, increasing successful grade-level transitions, reducing the dropout rate, and increasing graduation and completion rates for students served.

The ESG program is managed through the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Office of Student Support. Competitive grant reviews occurred for the first time in 2018-2019 and will continue to occur every three years based on the level of funding appropriated by the legislature. Eligible grant applicants include all Colorado local education agencies (LEAs), including those serving preschool through secondary schools and those operated by Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Institute charter schools, state licensed day treatment facilities or approved facility schools, and the state Charter School Institute (CSI).

Priority considerations were given to applicants who proposed serving all three federally defined highly mobile student populations, education providers who demonstrated support of their Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL), demonstrated support of their McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison, and/or provided letters of support from the education provider's leadership or surrounding community programs that serve highly mobile students, and education providers with more than 9 percent highly mobile student populations. Applicants submitted an electronic application to CDE's Competitive Grants Office on or before June 19, 2019. A CDE grant review was held on July 8, 2019. The State Board of Education approved the grant awards during the August 2019 Colorado State Board of Education meeting. Grants were awarded for three sequential fiscal years provided grantees are meeting grant requirements, are making reasonable progress toward performance outcomes, and state funds are annually appropriated. This report represents year 2 in the 3-year grant cohort approved by the Colorado State Board of Education.

Reporting Requirements

Each year, the authorizing legislation requires reporting on the evaluation of the grant program to the State Board of Education and the Colorado Legislature by March 31. This report is intended to meet the statutory reporting requirements outlined in section 22-32-138.5 C.R.S., through the analysis of program-level and student-level information annually submitted to CDE by ESG grantees. See [Appendix A: Definitions](#) for a list of commonly used terms throughout the report. This report covers evaluation data from 10 grantees available between July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. For more details on the evaluation methodology, see [Appendix B:](#)



[Evaluation Methodology](#). For example survey tools used for the evaluation, visit the [ESG Evaluation Website](#). The COVID-19 crisis caused a delay in grantees collecting and reporting data for year two of the grant. The flexibility of reporting timelines resulted in a delay in the report submission to the legislature. The data collection process and timeline for the year three report is on track to being submitted by the deadline.

2019-2021 Grant Awards

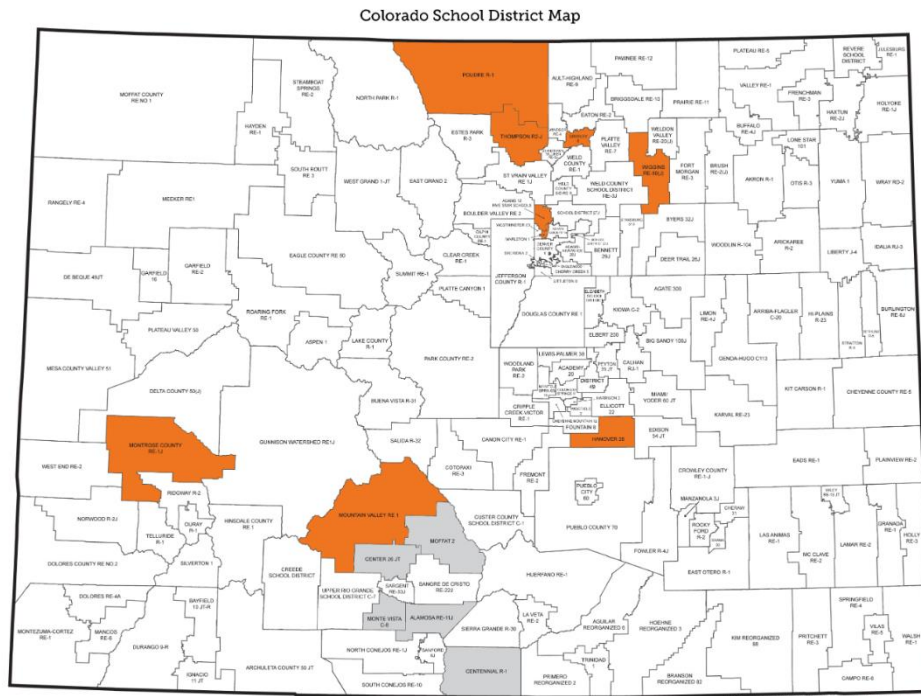
For the 2019-2020 school year, ten applicants were awarded \$805,662, the maximum amount available for grant distribution. In the 2020-2021 school year, this first cohort of ESG grantees was awarded \$827,664. Grantees include nine school districts and one BOCES, representing 10 Colorado counties. **TABLE 1** shows the grantees funded in Cohort 1 and amounts awarded across Years 1 and 2 of the grant.

TABLE 1: AWARDED GRANTEES		
District	2019-2020	2020-2021
Adams 12 Five Star Schools	\$85,000	\$90,000
Hanover 28	\$86,000	\$84,600
Mapleton 1	\$64,846	\$67,006
Montrose County RE-1J	\$30,000	\$30,000
Mountain Valley RE 1	\$65,400	\$75,400
Poudre R-1	\$80,351	\$87,891
San Luis Valley BOCES (<i>Serving 5 districts</i>)	\$147,156	\$144,776
Thompson R2-J	\$81,909	\$83,891
Greeley 6 (Weld County School District 6)	\$80,000	\$80,000
Wiggins RE-50(J)	\$85,000	\$84,100
Total	\$805,662	\$827,664

Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG Program Records

3,489

STUDENTS SERVED IN
2020-2021



Orange: Grants to school districts
Grey: Districts served by grants to Boards of Cooperative Education Services

Students Served

Students Served in 2020-2021

In 2020-2021, ESG program grantees reported serving 3,489 students:

- All grantees reported serving a total **2,417 students experiencing homelessness** (69.3 percent of students served). This represents 22.0 percent of homeless student pupil membership in Colorado in 2020-2021 and a 3.4 percentage point increase from the percentage of students experiencing homelessness served in 2019-2020 (which is a statistically significant increase).
- Eight out of 10 grantees reported serving **300 students in foster care or out-of-home placement** (8.6 percent of students served). This represents 31.8 percent of students in foster care in Colorado in 2020-2021 and a 23.2 percentage point increase from the percentage of foster students served in 2019-2020 (which is a statistically significant increase).
- Seven out of 10 grantees reported serving **874 migrant students** (25.1 percent of students served). This represents 30.9 percent of migrant student pupil membership in Colorado in 2020-2021 and a 2.4 percentage point decrease from the percentage of migrant students served in 2019-2020 (which is within expected year-to-year variation).



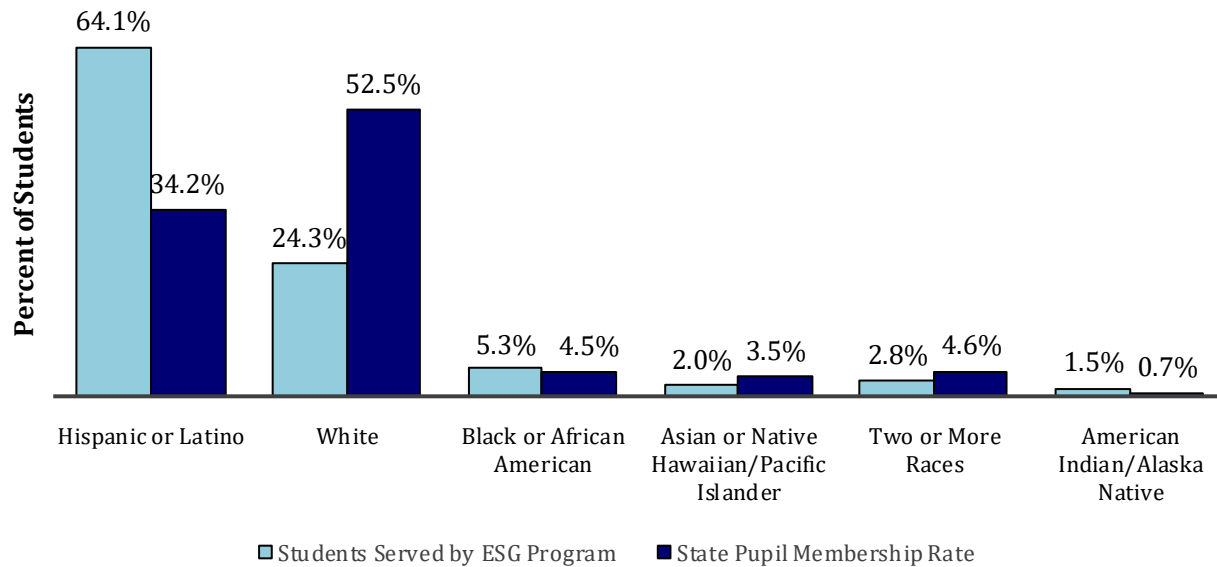
Of the 10 ESG program grantees, seven grantees served all three student groups. Two grantees served two student groups, and one grantee served only students experiencing homelessness.

Student Demographics

Demographic data were available for all students served by an ESG program in 2020-2021. A review by grade level showed that most students were in kindergarten through fifth grade (43.5 percent of students) followed by ninth through 12th grade (31.3 percent of students), sixth through eighth grade (21.9 percent of students), and prekindergarten (3.3 percent of students). The available data show 51.4 percent of students served were male and most students served were Hispanic or Latino (64.1 percent of students) or White (24.3 percent of students).

CHART 1 shows a breakout by race/ethnicity for the students served by the program compared to the 2020-2021 state pupil membership rate.

**CHART 1: STATE AND PROGRAM COMPARISON BY RACE/ETHNICITY
(N=3,489)**



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Report and Pupil Membership Data, 2020-2021.

ESG grantees faced unique barriers in this second year of the grant program. In their first year, grantees indicated they were making significant progress prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, but this progress was disrupted when schools transitioned to remote learning. This was evident in the 2020-2021 school year (which was largely remote for many grantees) as well, as ESG funded districts saw lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates than the previous year. Importantly, despite the pandemic, graduation rates were higher and dropout rates generally lower for ESG funded districts than for at-risk populations overall. Truancy rates were comparable with state rates for highly mobile students served by the grant, except for truancy rates among migrant students, which were higher. Given that dropout rates remained low, however, it is likely that this reflected difficulties with access to online learning in these largely rural districts rather than a lack of motivation to engage in school.

“COVID-19 illuminated the special needs of and disproportionate impact on vulnerable student populations, and has led to greater focus, understanding, programming and funding dedicated to closing those opportunity gaps.”

- Submitted by a grantee in an urban-suburban area

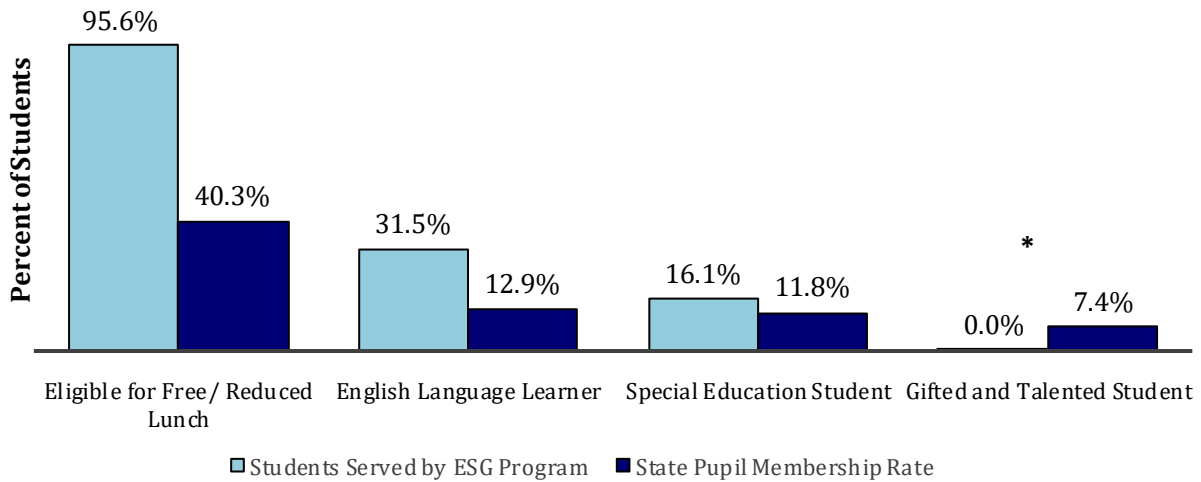
Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Report and Pupil Membership Data, 2020-2021.

Student-level data for students served in the 2020-2021 academic school year showed that 95.6 percent of students served qualified for free/reduced lunch, 31.5 percent of students served were English learners, 16.1 percent of students served had a special education designation, and 0.03 percent of students served were gifted and talented.



CHART 2 shows a breakout by instructional program service types for the students served by the program compared to the state average pupil membership rate of all students in the state in 2020-2021.

CHART 2: STATE AND PROGRAM COMPARISON OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM SERVICE TYPES (N=3,489)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

Note: These student groups are not mutually exclusive. *Gifted and Talented students served by the ESG Program = 0.03%.

“The challenges have definitely been brought out by COVID and the isolation it has brought to the most at risk population of the schools. Many law makers and government officials can't imagine the living situations these students are in every day and how the students look forward to school to be warm, have running water and warm food. Hopefully the worst is over and we can continue getting our lives back.”

- Submitted by a grantee in a remote area



Program Effectiveness and Student Outcomes

Outcomes for All Students Served

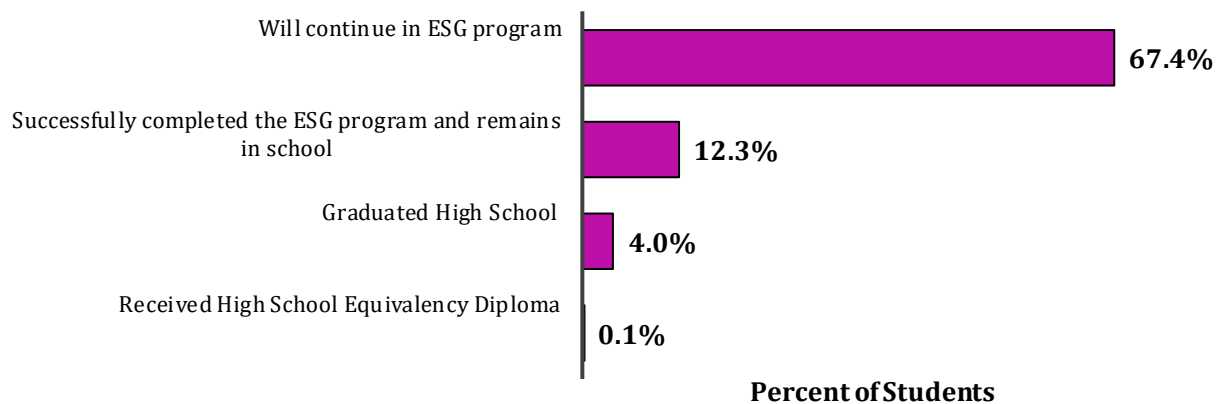
Of the students served by the ESG program, 83.9 percent experienced positive outcomes by the end of the 2020-2021 academic year (2,926 students). These outcomes reflected school completion, continuation of education, and completion of the program (i.e., cessation of services).

CHART 3 breaks down the positive outcomes for students served by these categories.

8 out of 10

STUDENTS EXPERIENCED POSITIVE OUTCOMES

CHART 3: POSITIVE OUTCOMES BY CATEGORY (N=3,489)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

“There are many success stories I could share here, the one that sticks with me the most is that of an eighth grade student... placed in foster care. This student is incredibly intelligent and has been receiving accelerated math tutoring from the ESG funded interventionist. At the time this incident took place the school was placed in a COVID lock down. The interventionist wasn’t meeting with groups as he normally would due to the already significant amount of time students were spending on their zoom classes. Instead he was supporting students during their online classes. This particular student was stressed about her grades, and about the amount and type of work she was being asked to do in BUZZ (an online curriculum/ class recourse used by our school during COVID). The interventionist was meeting with her outside of her class time to help her adequately complete her class work. He would use google chat to communicate and set up google meets with her at her convenience. The interventionist and this student became close through chatting and working together, and one day the student opened up to him about how she was really struggling emotionally and had been having suicidal thoughts. The interventionist talked to her, gave her emergency contact numbers, made a suicide prevention plan with her, and asked if he could talk to her aunt who she really trusts about finding her help. She agreed, and by working with her aunt and the school counselor they were able to find a counselor for this student. The student is doing a lot better now, after going through some really hard times. Since then the student has been doing very well academically and emotionally, and seems to have a very bright future ahead. She got the highest standardized test score in math in her class, and only one student in high school got a higher math score. Who knows how things would have turned out differently if she hadn’t had a trusted adult there for her when she reached out for help.”

- Submitted by a grantee in a remote area



Dropout Prevention

One intermediate goal of the ESG program is to reduce the number of students dropping out of school by providing students with intensive support focused on addressing these risk factors. In 2020-2021, one out of 10 grantees reported that none of the 25 students served in their program dropped out of school. The remaining grantees reported that a total of 85 students (2.4 percent of all students served and 5.3 percent of students served in seventh through 12th grade) dropped out of school. This is 2.9 percentage points higher than the dropout rate for grades 5-12 among ESG grantees in 2019-2020, potentially reflecting the impact of the pandemic on the students served by ESG.

Successful Grade-Level Transitions

The ESG legislation requires the annual reporting of increases in successful grade-level transitions for the grant-funded schools. CDE does not collect grade-level transition rates at the district or school level. Using the SASIDs of students served by the program submitted by ESG grantees, it is estimated that about 94.1 percent of students served in 2020-2021 enrolled in the next grade-level (2,651 students; a 0.4 percentage point decrease from 2019-2020) and 5.8 percent remained in the same grade level (163 students; a 0.3 percentage point increase).

Note: Only students with available school records in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 (N=2,806) were included in this analysis. The additional 683 students reported through SASIDs in 2019-2020 were not enrolled in Colorado in 2020-2021. Grantees reported that they attempted to contact every family served during the 2019-20 school year and were unable to locate some families at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Grantees indicated that this is likely due to the additional stress on the families due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Meeting Legislative Intent and District/School Outcomes

The authorizing legislation also requires the annual reporting of improvements in school attendance, reduction in behavioral and discipline incidents, reduction in the dropout rate, and increase in the graduation and completion rates for the grant funded schools.

CDE annually collects and publishes disaggregated information at the school, district, and state level on the percent of students who complete high school, the percent of students who drop out of school, and the percentage of habitually truant students by student group. Graduation, completion, dropout rates for 2019-2020 were calculated specifically for the districts and schools served by the ESG program and serve as a baseline for these metrics in the ESG program. Truancy rates were not available by student group in 2019-2020. Graduation, completion, dropout, and truancy rates for 2020-2021 school year were also calculated for the districts and schools served by the ESG program.

Note: Discipline data by ESG student groups is not reported. However, trends in academic performance, school attendance, and discipline incidents are also captured in the Performance Objectives and Program Outcomes section.

Graduation and Completion Rates

In general, ESG funded districts and schools reported higher or similar graduation and completion rates for secondary students served in 2020-2021 compared to the state rates. Notable exceptions are the graduation rates for migrant students and the completion rates for foster students (except 7-year rates in both cases),



which were below state rates. Also notable is that, in general, ESG program graduation and completion rates fell from the first year of grant, likely due to challenges associated with online learning and COVID-19. That rates were still higher than state rates is promising and shows that even in a year filled with unprecedented challenges, ESG grantees improved the chances of success for vulnerable students in their districts. Data also show that highly mobile students continue to benefit from having additional years to complete their education.

Table 2 compares the state student group 4-year and extended graduation rates and completion rates with those reported by funded districts and schools in years 1 (2019-2020) and 2 (2020-2021) of the grant. For more information on these rates, visit the [Graduation Rates](#) CDE webpages.

TABLE 2. COMPARISON OF STATE AND YEAR 1 / YEAR 2 PROGRAM GRADUATION RATES BY STUDENT GROUP									
Year	Foster			Homeless			Migrant		
	ESG		State Foster	ESG		State Homeless	ESG		State Migrant
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2020-2021	2019-2020	2020-2021	2020-2021	2019-2020	2020-2021	2020-2021
Graduation Rates									
4-Year Rates	33.3%	31.8%	30.5%	62.7%	57.5%	53.6%	71.4%	66.4%	67.0%
5-Year Rates	43.2%	37.7%	36.7%	69.6%	67.5%	63.2%	73.7%	69.7%	74.9%
6-Year Rates	44.9%	42.9%	35.9%	70.1%	71.3%	64.1%	77.9%	73.8%	76.5%
7-Year Rates	40.3%	47.4%	34.5%	71.5%	71.3%	65.6%	73.3%	80.2%	74.0%
Completion Rates									
4-Year Rates	39.3%	34.9%	38.8%	65.6%	59.4%	55.6%	71.4%	68.2%	67.6%
5-Year Rates	48.1%	42.4%	46.7%	72.7%	71.9%	66.9%	74.7%	69.7%	76.5%
6-Year Rates	59.0%	51.2%	51.5%	74.5%	76.0%	68.3%	77.9%	74.8%	78.4%
7-Year Rates	53.2%	63.2%	54.3%	76.6%	76.8%	70.5%	73.3%	80.3%	74.9%

Source: Colorado Department of Education, Student End-of-Year Snapshot Collections, 2019-2020, 2020-2021

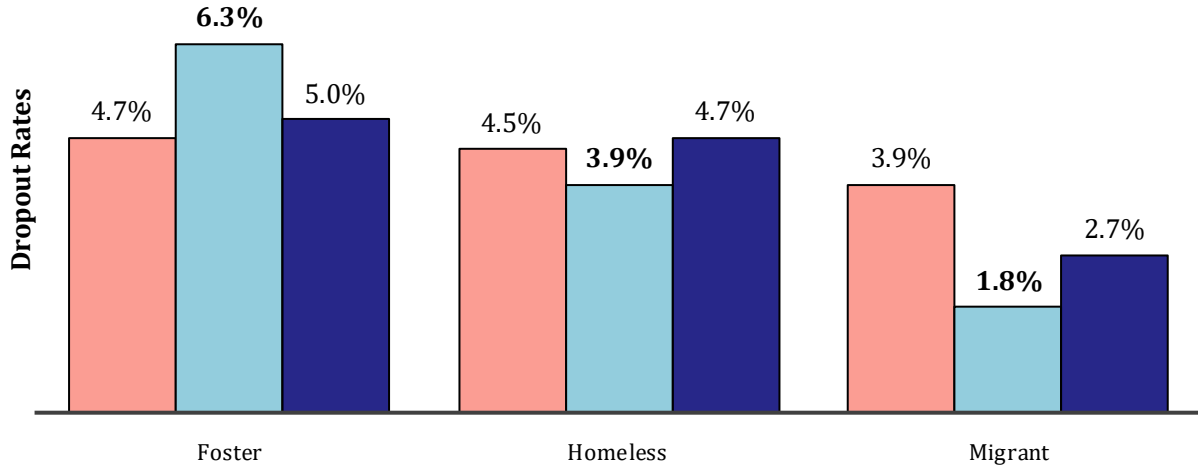
Note: The rates depicted are annual rates and not cohort rates. Program rates include data from 13 districts served and 1 school.

Dropout Rates

In general, ESG-funded districts and schools reported lower dropout rates for students served in 2020-2021 compared to the same student group state rates and ESG-funded district rates from 2019-2020, with the exception of dropout rates for students in foster care.

CHART 4 compares the dropout rate for student groups across the state with ESG funded districts/schools. For more information on these rates, visit the [Dropout Statistics](#) CDE webpages.

CHART 4: STATE AND PROGRAM DROPOUT RATE COMPARISON BY STUDENT GROUP FOR SCHOOL YEARS 2019-2020 AND 2020-2021



■ ESG Funded Schools/Districts 2019-2020 ■ ESG Funded Schools/Districts 2020-2021 ■ State Foster/Homeless/Migrant

Source: Colorado Department of Education, Student End-of-Year Snapshot Collections, 2019-2020, 2020-2021

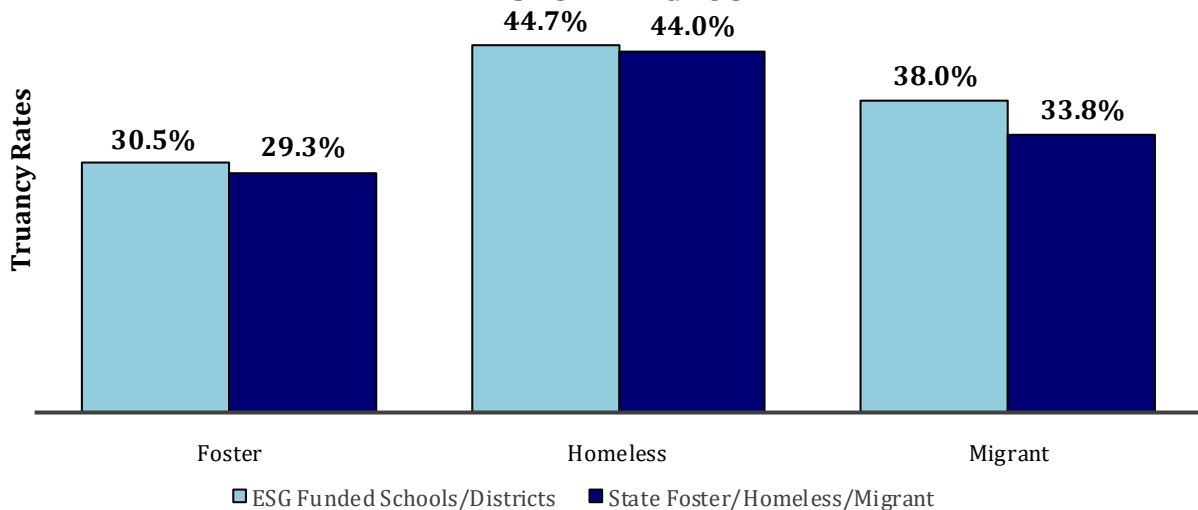
Note: These student groups are not mutually exclusive. Program rates include data from 13 districts served and 1 school.

Truancy Rates

In general, ESG-funded districts and schools reported very similar truancy rates for students served in 2020-2021 compared to the same student group state rates except for truancy rates for migrant students, which were substantially higher, potentially reflecting the difficulty students in these largely rural districts had with regularly attending school in a virtual setting.

CHART 5 compares the truancy rate for the state to funded districts/schools by student groups. For more information on these rates, visit the [Attendance Information](#) CDE webpages.

CHART 5: STATE AND PROGRAM TRUANCY RATE COMPARISON BY STUDENT GROUP



Source: Colorado Department of Education, Student End-of-Year Snapshot Collection, 2019-2020

Note: These student groups are not mutually exclusive. Program rates include data from 13 districts served and 1 school.



Grantees' Achievement of Performance Objectives

As part of the conditions of the grant, each ESG grantee developed one performance objective in each of three categories required by statute to be achieved by the end of the three-year grant period. Grantees were instructed to rate their performance objectives using the following guidance and provide evidence for the rating selected:

- *If you went above and beyond your objective(s), then you exceeded your goal.*
- *If you have completely (100 percent) met your objective(s), then you have met your goal.*
- *If you have partially met your objective (more than 50 percent), then indicate approaching.*
- *If you have made minimal gains on your objective, select not making progress.*

To better identify how many grantees met or exceeded their objectives, ratings were aggregated by grantees. When focusing on the ratings exceeding and meeting, the results showed that three out of 10 grantees met or exceeded at least half of their objectives, and seven out of 10 grantees met or exceeded at least a third of their objectives.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on program implementation and data collection, an additional response of *unable to rate performance objective* was included in the 2020-2021 reporting survey. Grantees unable to rate their objectives were prompted to provide a follow-up explanation. The most common programmatic reasons cited included ***inability to implement program tracking remotely*** and ***other fallout due to COVID-19 (e.g., rolling school closures, staff illnesses, and staff overwhelm)***.

Grantees also reported barriers related to the evaluation of their programs and reporting to CDE. The most common barriers cited included ***delayed data collections*** and ***difficulties in consistent data collection during combination in-person / remote learning***.

Ratings by Objective Areas

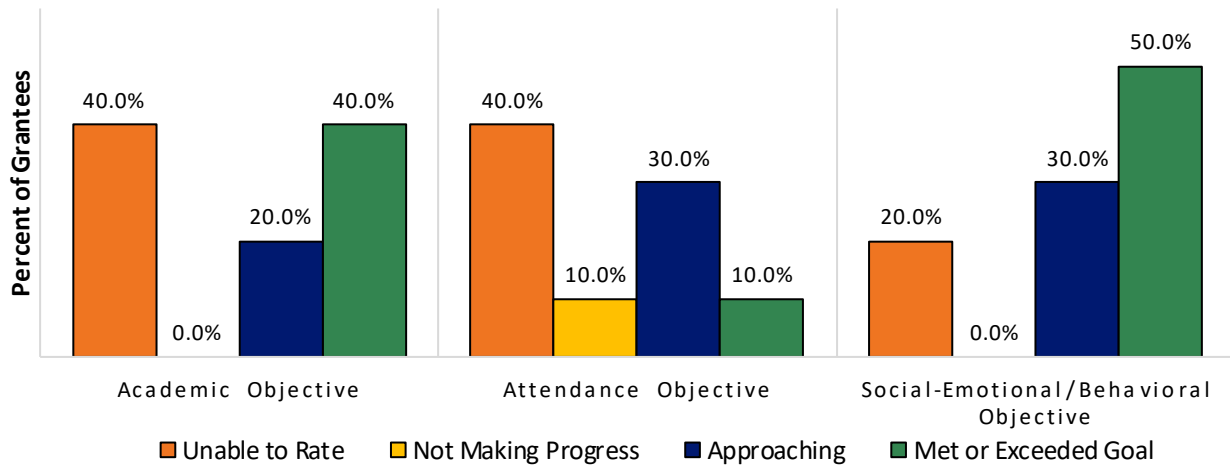
Grantees set one performance objective in each of the following areas:

- **Academic Improvement Objective** focuses on academic outcomes for highly mobile children and youth either through direct academic interventions or to facilitate connections with the education provider's academic supports. Six out of 10 grantees reported approaching, meeting, or exceeding this objective. The remaining four reported that data were not available to rate this objective.
- **School Attendance Objective** focuses on demonstrating reduction of school attendance barriers for highly mobile students and increased attendance. Four out of 10 grantees reported approaching, meeting, or exceeding this objective. One grantee reported not making progress on this objective and another failed to report their progress. The remaining four reported that data were not available.
- **Behavioral Objective** focuses on reductions in behavioral or discipline incidents and an increase in essential skills through evidenced-based programming. Eight out of 10 grantees reported approaching, meeting, or exceeding this objective. The remaining two reported that data were not available to rate this objective.



Overall, grantees were significantly more likely to have met or exceeded their social-emotional/behavioral performance objectives than to have met or exceeded the other performance objectives. **CHART 6** shows the percent by ratings for each of the three objective areas.

CHART 6: PERCENT OF RATING FOR EACH OF THE THREE OBJECTIVE AREAS



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

Note: One grantee did not report progress on their Attendance Objective.

Grantees reported that 72.9 percent of students served received academic services, 81.7 percent of students served received attendance related services, 62.8 and 74.4 percent of students served received behavioral supports and social-emotional related services, respectively, and 58.5 percent of students served received services pertaining to post-secondary workforce readiness through the ESG program.



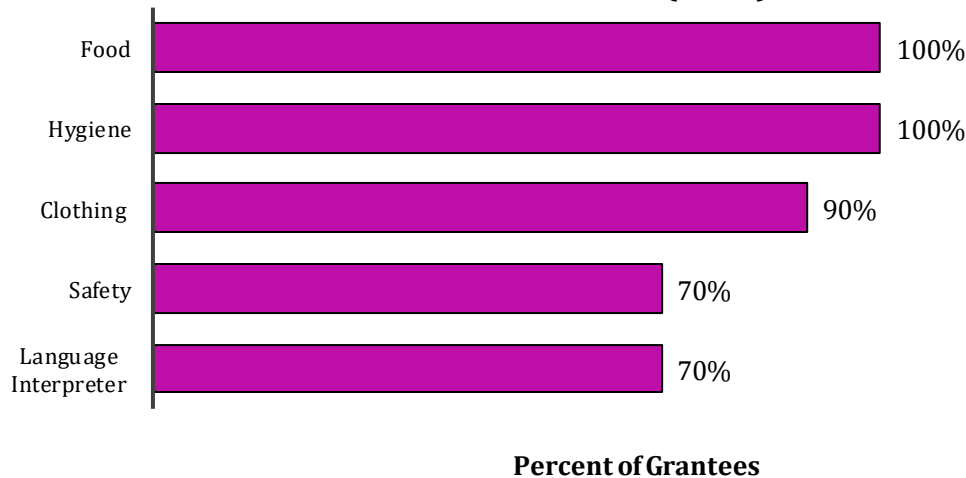
Highly Mobile Student Framework for Service and Support

The Highly Mobile Student Framework for Service and Support is the foundation of the ESG program. This framework outlines how to improve educational stability and outcomes for highly mobile students. This multi-faceted framework includes services and supports focused on filling essential needs, increasing connectedness in and out of school, addressing barriers to learning, and offering multiple pathways to high school graduation and postsecondary success. See [Appendix C](#) for more in-depth information about the framework.

Filling Essential Needs

The ESG program funds efforts to ensure that students have access to basic needs such as clothing, food, and housing. **CHART 7** provides a breakout of the most common essential needs met by the ESG program.

CHART 7: MOST COMMON SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOCUSED ON ESSENTIAL NEEDS (N=10)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

Note: Grantees could select more than one support service.

“While we were not able to conduct home visits, our staff was able to maintain regular check-ins with families of our highly mobile students in different ways. These connections were made through phone calls, emails, and some in-person visits. Staff was instructed to connect with their respective families to see what they needed in order to address barriers that might have limited their ability to attend school, complete their homework, engage in remote learning, etc. Based on these connections, staff was able to identify needs around personal hygiene, clothing, food, etc. We strategized together in order to provide things like new shoes, socks, and special care packages for students when they needed to learn remotely. All of these strategies helped with students confidence, in turn increasing positive relationships. The families were so accepting and thankful for these items, and we were ecstatic that the grant allowed us the opportunity to provide such items for these families.”

- Submitted by a grantee in an outlying city



Increasing Connectedness (In and Out of School)

The ESG program funds services and supports to ensure that students have an opportunity to form meaningful connections with peers and adults in all aspects of their lives. **CHART 8** provides a breakout of the services and supports provided to increase student connectedness.

CHART 8: MOST COMMON SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOCUSED ON CONNECTEDNESS (N=10)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

Note: Grantees could select more than one support service.

Letter from a student:

"I wanted to let you know that I am so thankful for everything you do for me and my sister. Thank you for taking the time out of your morning to come pick me up and take me to school, thank you for taking time off your day to bring me home. I want you to know you are an incredible teacher and our school and students are so thankful to have someone like you. You have made so many changes in our school you make us better people. You have helped us change so many things and stand out more to things we need to say or do. I really enjoy having a meeting with you. I wish I could have you as an actual teacher. You are someone that makes things we are talking about really interesting. You listen to any problems that we might have and tell us how to fix them and make them better. Your advice has made all of us so much better and to feel more confident about ourselves or each other. This is just something little that I wanted to tell you and to let you know how thankful I am, hope we keep having you in our school and you keep being the amazing teacher you are."

- Submitted by a grantee in a remote area

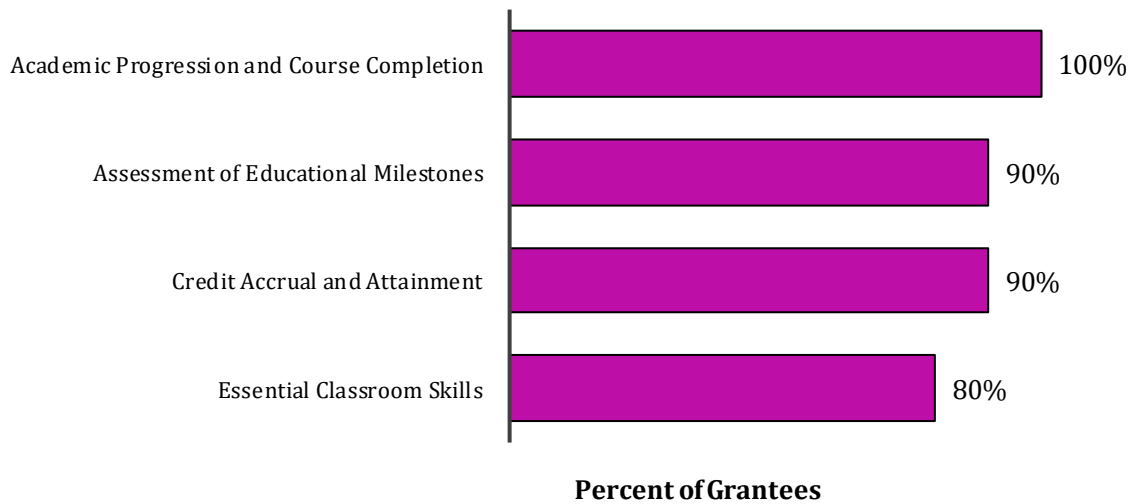


Addressing Barriers to Learning

The ESG program funded innovative solutions to addressing barriers to learning for highly mobile students.

CHART 9 provides a breakout of the most common innovative services and supports implemented to address barriers to learning.

CHART 9: MOST COMMON SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOCUSED ON ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO LEARNING (N=10)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

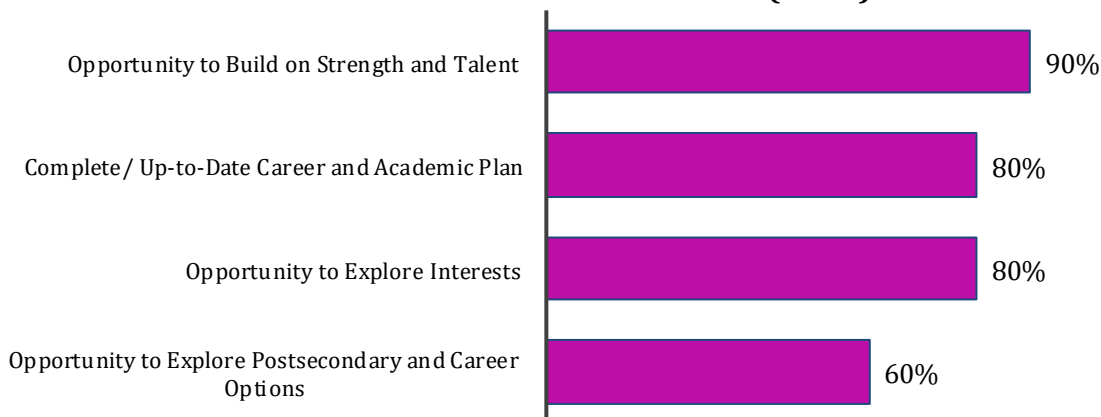
Note: Grantees could select more than one support service.

Offering Multiple Pathways

The ESG funds a variety of structured academic opportunities for students to achieve their goal for high school graduation and postsecondary success based on the individual student’s academic interest and unique needs.

CHART 10 provides a breakout of the most common pathways available through the program.

CHART 10: MOST COMMON SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOCUSED ON MULTIPLE PATHWAYS (N=10)



Source: Colorado Department of Education, ESG End-of-Year Reporting, 2020-2021

Note: Grantees could select more than one support service.



Most Effective Strategies

Grantees were asked to report on the most effective strategies that have positively impacted their programs. The most effective strategies identified by grantees included focusing on strategies that increase **connectedness with students and families**, providing **academic supports** to students, **meeting essential needs**, increasing **community engagement**, supporting/assigning **dedicated program staff** for the identification and support of highly mobile students, and implementing **flexible programming to meet individual student needs**.

“Being able to fund a full-time interventionist had the most profound effect on the population served. The interventionist was able to meet with k-12 students on a daily, or bi-daily basis. He supported students based on their individual academic and social emotional needs. For example, he was able to do behavior check-ins for particular students, help with language development and building literacy skills in kindergartners, provide reading intervention services for a third grade English language learner, provide emotional support to a third grader who lost his mother, provide accelerated math instruction for a group of high-flying middle schoolers, and support high schoolers in homework and course completion.”

- Submitted by a grantee in a remote area

Lessons Learned

Grantees were asked to specifically describe special circumstances that positively affected progress on achieving program objectives. Program success was attributed to the following factors:

- Dedicated program staff or team focused on providing supports to students (e.g., interventionist, specialist, mentors, liaisons, and youth advocates)
 - Focus on identifying students in need of services
 - Cross team collaboration and partnerships within and outside of the district
 - Flexibility in programming for students with special circumstances
-

“Having people whose primary focus is on this population is essential. We have families who were able to secure emergency housing because we had staff members whose responsibility was ensuring that our homeless families had their basic needs met. These staff members are also resource experts who are able to connect families to their basic needs. COVID created incredible distress on families--financial, health-related, and emotional. For example, some families couldn't have their students attend school in-person as an intervention because of the health risk to the other families in the home. Home visits have also been impacted due to COVID. As an alternative, we attempted to invite families into the school, which was not always successful. Connections have definitely been impacted by COVID; authentic connection is difficult through Google Meets.”

- Submitted by a grantee in an urban-suburban area

Grantees were also asked to specifically describe circumstances that negatively affected progress on achieving program objectives. **Program disruptions due to COVID-19 and remote learning** were the most cited challenges with program implementation and achieving program goals in 2020-2021. Other challenges mentioned included



staff turnover and the amount of time required to fill positions and difficulty remaining in contact with highly mobile students, particularly during remote learning.

Impact of COVID-19 on Students and Programs

In general, grantees were successfully implementing programming and making progress on their program goals prior to March 2019. Since the beginning of the pandemic, grantees have continually adapted programming to build on this progress despite an ever-changing learning landscape. The most common implementation challenges reported by grantees in 2020-2021 were directly due to COVID-19.

Results of a thematic analysis of the responses (N=10) revealed that highly mobile students were most impacted by the pandemic. Challenges cited included **lack of basic needs** and **limited access to the internet/WIFI and/or needed devices**.

“The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the attendance rates in the school district but especially those of students experiencing homelessness. Many highly mobile students were not able to access the necessary technology to “attend” classes, methods of taking attendance varied widely from school to school, parents and guardians struggled with knowing how to support their students in engaging remotely, and many students and families either prioritized survival over school and/or became frustrated to the point that they stopped attending.”

- Submitted by a grantee in the Denver metro area

Grantees also voiced concerns on the **impact that COVID-19 will continue to have on students**, including on school connectedness, future academic performance, and attendance. Several grantees take a whole child approach in individual work with students and families when addressing academic, attendance, and behavioral goals. This approach allows grantees and students to address concerns individually.

“COVID resulted in the district shifting between remote and in-person learning several times over the course of the school year. When working remotely, some students did not have access to internet, multiple children in the home who had to watch younger siblings while their parents worked, decreased engagement in school via virtual instruction, poor attendance, and a decrease in student educational progress/learning. Due to multiple shifts between remote and in-person learning, instruction and work with students were impacted with a decrease in fidelity and consistency of instructional models and supports. Families and students struggled to remain connected and consistent with the teachers, school, and Educational Advocate.”

- Submitted by a grantee in a remote area

At a programmatic level, grantees reported that a **decline in services** occurred due to **difficulty with adapting traditionally in-person services**. Grantees also reported **difficulty in reaching students and families** during the transition.



However, grantees also reported successes during this time. For example, grantees commonly reported that programs were able to **adapt programming to focus on filling immediate needs of students and families and on building positive relationships with students**. Grantees maintained services to the greatest extent possible during this difficult disruption to direct, in-person student services.

“Staff was able to engage with students in a more personal positive way. They were able to take the time to connect with students and their families on a very personal level by having intentional conversations around what families need. This, in turn, has strengthened communication between the schools and families. Prior to the pandemic, this might not have been the case. The challenges that the pandemic gave all of us provided common ground to start a conversation, and families were much more willing to share what they were in need of. In the past, this was a challenge because some families did not want to share their needs.”

- Submitted by a grantee in an outlying city

Grantees also cited that **varied and repetitive outreach efforts** with students and families contributed to continuing services and keeping students engaged (e.g., check-in calls and virtual visits, using multiple means to track down and engage students, and continued supports to address individual needs).

Further, grantees reported that **strong collaborative partnerships** occurred for the purpose of better serving students and meeting immediate needs.

“By collaborating with the admissions team, the liaison under ESG and the admissions group were able to develop a simple tracking system to easily communicate Best Interest Determination (BID) results of names of foster students entering our district for admissions to quickly reference in their work. This eliminated a communication barrier in which admissions would not always be aware of students in foster care enrolling which could affect immediate enrollment. This partnership and system proved essential throughout COVID. This also eliminated the inefficiency of the liaison needing to contact admissions regarding every single case to secure immediate enrollment.”

- Submitted by a grantee in an urban-suburban area

Finally, grantees reported that the additional challenges associated with maintaining contact in this difficult year led to **programmatic changes that will continue to have positive effects on future service delivery**.



“This year has been a year filled with special circumstances. Although [our] schools were “live” all year, we still had to make adjustments to some, if not negative, then at least different circumstances which included: office staff quarantines, homeless family quarantines, a shortage of staff in the Transportation Department, phones that worked through passwords and apps only, students learning remotely, as well as distribution of hotspots to many families without access to internet. Communications changed from face to face visiting to only being possible if some sort of machine was being used. All of this highlighted a need to begin documenting and tracking every family contact or request. The circumstances we all adapted to, this last school year, actually contributed positively to the implementation of our program. [We] developed a complete structure to support the needs of these highly mobile students, with processes and protocols which include documented data bases that will be maintained with minimal effort or expense for years to come.”

- Submitted by a grantee in the Denver metro area

Conclusion

The ESG program represents the state’s primary investment in removing educational barriers and supporting educational stability for highly mobile students. Results from the current evaluation revealed that nearly 3,500 students were served by the ESG program in the 2020-2021 academic school year. Services and supports provided to students and families (e.g., filling basic needs, increasing connectedness, addressing barriers to learning, and providing multiple pathways for highly mobile students) contributed to positive results on performance objectives and student outcomes. For example, 84 percent of students experienced positive outcomes, such as school completion and continuation of education within the same school district. Of the students served in 2019-2020 who enrolled in a Colorado school in 2020-2021, 94.1 percent successfully transitioned to the next grade-level.

Grantees reported that the most effective strategies that have positively impacted program and student outcomes included increasing connectedness with students and families, providing academic supports to students, meeting essential needs, increasing community engagement, dedicated program staff for the identification and support of highly mobile students, and implementing flexible programming to meet individual student needs.

ESG grantees faced unique barriers in this second year of the grant program. In their first year, grantees indicated they were making significant progress prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, but this progress was disrupted when schools transitioned to remote learning. This was evident in the 2020-2021 school year (which was largely remote for many grantees) as well, as ESG funded districts saw lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates than the previous year. Importantly, despite the pandemic, graduation rates were higher and dropout rates generally lower for ESG funded districts than for at-risk populations overall. Truancy rates were comparable with state rates for highly mobile students served by the grant, except for truancy rates among migrant students, which were higher than the state rate. Given that dropout rates remained low, however, it is likely that this reflected difficulties with access to online learning in these largely rural districts rather than a lack of motivation to engage in school.

COVID-19 continued to impact programs in several ways (e.g., decline in services, fewer students identified for supports, discontinued program aspects, difficulties reaching students due to online learning) and barriers such as limited access to basic needs, devices, and internet were identified during remote programming. Although



disruptions due to COVID-19 occurred, most grantees were able to adapt and leverage their programs to focus more on filling immediate needs and building positive relationships with students and families.

The ESG program provides opportunities to students who may otherwise not have these supports. Evaluation results for the ESG program indicate that the program met its legislative intent in this second year to remove educational barriers, as well as support educational stability, for highly mobile students. Results of the evaluation also revealed that highly mobile students were highly impacted by the pandemic in funded districts. Continued funding to support this work will support COVID-19 response, recovery, and increase opportunities for success for highly mobile students.



Endnotes

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- ⁹ Kull, M. A., Morton, M. H., Patel, S., Curry, S., & Carreon, E. (2019). *Missed Opportunities: Education among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America*. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago*.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions

Highly mobile students- means children or youth who at any time during the academic year were homeless, as defined in section 22-1-102.5, C.R.S.; were in non-certified kinship care, as defined in section 19-1-103, C.R.S.; were students in out-of-home placement, as defined in section 22-32-138(1)(h), C.R.S.; or were migrant children, as defined in section 22-23-103, C.R.S.

Homeless children and youth- means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate primary nighttime residence and includes children and youth who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks (that are deemed as inadequate housing) or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Abandoned in hospitals.
- Residing in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances; and/or
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances.

Kinship: According to Colorado Revised Statute 19-1-103, there are two types of kinship placement. The definitions are as follows:

- (71.3) "Kin", for purposes of a "kinship foster care home" or for purposes of "noncertified kinship care", may be a relative of the child, a person ascribed by the family as having a family-like relationship with the child, or a person that has a prior significant relationship with the child. These relationships take into account cultural values and continuity of significant relationships with the child.
- (78.7) "Noncertified kinship care" means a child is being cared for by a relative or kin who has a significant relationship with the child in circumstances when there is a safety concern by a county department and where the relative or kin has not met the foster care certification requirements for a kinship foster care home or has chosen not to pursue that certification process.

Student in out-of-home placement- Means a student who at any time during an academic term is in foster care and receiving educational services through a state-licensed day treatment facility, who is otherwise in placement out of the home as that term is defined in section 19-1-103 (85), C.R.S. or who is in placement outside of the home as a result of an adjudication pursuant to article 2 of title 19, C.R.S. It includes a child or youth who transfers enrollment as a result of being returned to his or her home at the conclusion of out-of-home placement.



Appendix B: Evaluation Methodology

Data Collection

Evaluation data were collected from all 10 grantees funded by the ESG program. Grantees were responsible for submitting their End-of-Year Survey to CDE using a Qualtrics survey platform. In addition, they were required to securely submit State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs) for all students served.

The results reported in this document reflect data collected at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Webinars were conducted in preparing grantees to collect and enter data. Throughout the reporting period, CDE staff were available to assist with problems and answer questions.

The CDE staff analyzed the data for any irregularities and conducted mathematical checks to correctly calculate and tabulate data. If data were not accurate, CDE staff would contact the grantee for clarification and revisions. These strategies ensure that year-end reporting is as accurate as possible.

Analysis

Aggregated data from the materials collected were downloaded from the SEEDC and Qualtrics systems (two data-collection systems used for grantee reporting) as Excel spreadsheets by CDE staff, which facilitated the statistical analysis of process and outcome data. All Personally Identified Information (PII) data was handled and stored securely in accordance with CDE guidelines. Using disaggregated and aggregated data, CDE staff conducted quantitative (i.e., descriptive statistics) and qualitative analyses (i.e., thematic analysis).



Appendix C: Highly Mobile Student Framework

Below are the elements of the service and support framework. Listed are examples of services and supports that are needed to improve student outcomes.

Essential needs — means ensuring students have access to basic human needs, which includes the following:

- Food
- Housing
- Safety
- Clothing
- Hygiene
- Language Interpreter (if needed)

Connectedness (in and out of school) — Refers to ensuring students have an opportunity to form meaningful connections with peers and adults in all aspects of their lives. Programs that support connectedness include, but are not limited to:

- Enhanced mentoring (programs that connect to adults and peer networks)
- Extracurricular
- Academic engagement/interest exploration
- Community engagement
- School climate

Innovative solutions to address barriers to learning — Refers to the education provider's efforts to reduce barriers to learning for highly mobile students. Examples of programs include, but are not limited to:

- Academic progression and course completion
- Seamless transfer of coursework
- Assessment of academic gaps due to school mobility
- Essential classroom skills
- Assessment of educational milestones
- Complete and up-to-date student assessment
- Credit accrual and attainment

Multiple pathways — Defined as a variety of structured academic opportunities for students to achieve their goal for high school graduation and postsecondary success. Each pathway is defined by its programming and is accessed by each student based on the individual student's academic interest and unique needs. Examples include:

- Complete and up-to-date career and academic plan
- Opportunity to explore interests
- Opportunity to build on areas of strength and talent
- Opportunity to explore a multitude of postsecondary and career options