



To: Texas Judges Who Hear CPS Cases
From: The Honorable Robin Sage, (ret.)
Jurist in Residence, Office of Court Administration
Date: January 3, 2013
RE: Texas Mounts Effort to Improve Educational Outcomes of Children
and Youth in Foster Care

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 marked the beginning of a national trend to improve well-being outcomes of children and youth in foster care. Recognizing that education plays a huge role in successful well-being outcomes, the Supreme Court of Texas in 2010 created by court order the Children's Commission Education Committee, a two-year, judicially led collaborative effort between high level judicial, child welfare and education system representatives. In 2012, the committee produced *The Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care*. The report's recommendations include courtroom best practices, education and child welfare policy and practice modifications, and specific actions that can help eliminate systemic barriers to school success faced by children in foster care. To see all the recommendations, including commentary (Click [here for the full report](#)).



As a result of the Education Committee's efforts:

- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) hired staff to develop expertise regarding education of students in care.
- TEA issued a letter to school administrators outlining the unique challenges children in foster care face and ways local schools and school districts can work with DFPS to help them maintain education stability. ([Click here to view the letter.](#))
- Texas will hold a first of its kind multi-disciplinary summit in February 2013 to continue to raise awareness of this issue.

Q: What can I do as a judge?

- A:**
1. Read the *Texas Blueprint* and implement some of its judicial recommendations in your jurisdiction.
 2. Ask questions about school during your CPS hearings to prompt caseworkers and advocates to have answers ready in court.
 3. Lead efforts in your jurisdiction to support or start collaborations between CPS, the schools, and stakeholders.

Q: Why is this initiative so important?

A: Education outcomes of children in Texas foster care are very poor, and no one system – the courts, CPS, or the schools – can fix the problem by itself. These children are *our* responsibility and we must all work together to remove obstacles to their educational success.

Q: Where can I go to find out more?

A: In the next few months, the Children's Commission will produce tools and resources for judges and others, which will be available on-line on a special webpage dedicated to education of Texas foster youth. More news to come!