

SEPTEMBER  
2018



# HOW ARE WE DOING?

Children *and* Youth in  
Government Care *and*  
Youth on Youth Agreements



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

Ministry of  
Education



## Definitions

### **Children and Youth (or Students) in Care (CYIC / on YAG)**

Refers to a child or youth who is in the custody, care or guardianship of a Director (CFCSA) or a director of adoption designated under the Adoption Act, or on a Youth Agreement. This cohort includes students identified in the B.C. K–12 education system as children under a Continuing Custody Order (CCO), Youth Agreement (YAG), interim and temporary custody orders, children under Special Needs or Voluntary Care agreements, and children under orders from another province or jurisdiction. This cohort, ages 5-19, does not include adult and graduated adult students.

### **Children and Youth (or Students) Not in Care (Non -CYIC)**

Within the scope of this report, the terms “Not in Care” and “Non-CYIC” refer to students in B.C. public or independent schools who are not under the care or custody of the provincial government, ages 5-19, excluding adult and graduated adult students. This cohort is not the same as a provincial average which includes all ages including adult and graduated adults as well as CYIC students.

### **Diverse Needs – Diverse Abilities and Disabilities – Special Needs**

In this report, the terms listed above are used interchangeably to denote students who have any of the twelve special needs designations.

### **Indigenous**

Refers to students who have ever been identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, or Inuit) on the annual student demographic data collection (“1701”).

### **Child under a Continuing Custody Order (CCO)**

Refers to children and youth who are under a Continuing Custody Order (CCO). The Director becomes the sole guardian of the child and may consent to a child’s adoption and the Public Guardian and Trustee becomes the sole guardian of the estate of the child. A CCO terminates when the child reaches 19 years of age, or the child is adopted, marries, or the court cancels the order, or the custody of the child is transferred under Section 54 of the CFCSA.

### **Youth Agreement (YAG)**

Refers to a youth between 16 and 18 years of age, whose safety is at risk if they live at home and who do not have a caregiver willing and able to provide care, under an agreement to receive financial assistance and support without being brought into care. The Ministry has included Youth Agreements in the CYIC cohort although the legal definition of CYIC does not include youth on youth agreements and only includes youth up to age 18, whereas in Education up to and including age 19 is included in standard reports.

### **Evergreen Certificate**

This credential is intended to recognize the accomplishments of students with special needs who are unable to meet graduation requirements due to their special need. The Evergreen Certificate is not a graduation credential, and students with Evergreens cannot transition directly to post-secondary studies.

### **Dogwood Diploma**

A B.C. Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma) is awarded to students upon completion of a minimum of 80 credits and writing the Graduation Numeracy Assessment (GNA) and the Graduation Literacy Assessment (GLA).

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## Executive Summary

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In October 2017, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) publicly released *Room for Improvement: Toward Better Education Outcomes for Children Care*. The report focused on discrepancies in educational outcomes for children in government care compared to all children and made six recommendations to the ministries of Education and Children and Family Development. This report addresses one of those six recommendations: to publicly report on educational outcomes of children and youth in government care, by September 2018.

This report focuses on students who have come into government care (CYIC), including those on a Continuing Custody Order (CCO), youth agreement (YAG), interim and temporary custody orders, special needs or voluntary care agreements, and children under custody orders from another province or jurisdiction.

This report uses a Non-CYIC cohort as a reference point for the educational outcomes of children and youth in care. This cohort is not the same as a “provincial average” which includes students of all ages, including adults and graduated adults. The Non-CYIC cohort was defined to be consistent with the CYIC cohort definition. As the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s Family Preservation programs improve, fewer children will come into government care and the ones who do come into care may have the greatest needs. It may become increasingly more difficult for CYIC to emulate Non-CYIC.



## Key Findings

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The number of B.C. K–12 students in government care (**6,324 students in 2016/17**) has decreased over the past ten years although the proportion (**approximately 1% of overall student headcount**) remains stable.

Children who come into government care are not demographically characteristic of the overall student population. There are a greater number of Indigenous students **64% of CYIC/on YAG vs. 11% of general population** and **Diverse Needs students 50% of CYIC/on YAG vs. 10% of general population** amongst children and youth in care. **Approximately 32% of CYIC/on YAG in 2016/17** are both Indigenous and have Diverse Needs, compared to **2% of Non-CYIC students**.



**Six-year completion rates** for CYIC/on YAG students have improved from **37% in 2012/13 to 46% in 2016/17**.

Amongst CYIC/on YAG students, those who are **Indigenous and have designated special needs** have **lower educational outcomes** than for students who were either Indigenous or had designated special needs; there is **evidence of complexities in intersectionality**.





While British Columbia's education system is highly regarded as having exceptional outcomes overall, these outcomes do not reflect the experiences of all B.C. students.

## Introduction

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Children in government care face exceptional circumstances; for children in care to thrive, government, schools, families and communities need to work together to ensure children are adequately supported to reach their goals. In October 2017, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) published the report *Room for Improvement: Toward Better Education Outcomes for Children in Care*, highlighting areas where the system has not met the needs of a significant number of children and youth in care.

This is not the first-time educational outcomes of children and youth in care and those on youth agreements (CYIC/on YAG) in B.C. have been highlighted. In 2010, 2015, and 2017, educational outcomes for children and youth in care were key aspects of B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth reports, demonstrating that there is progress to be made in government to support children and youth in care to gain parity in educational outcomes, including completion rates and literacy and numeracy assessments.

The Ministry of Education is committed to improving the education system's ability to equip all students in B.C. to become educated citizens. The Ministry supports the RCY's recommendation to strengthen its accountability by publicly reporting on outcomes for children and youth in care across the province.

The Ministry of Education recognizes three overarching goals of modern education: Intellectual Development, Human and Social Development, and Career Development. These goals have been critical to student success and are implicit within educational legislation for the past 30 years and continue to guide the ministry's work today.

## PROFILE OF CYIC/ON YAG STUDENTS IN B.C.

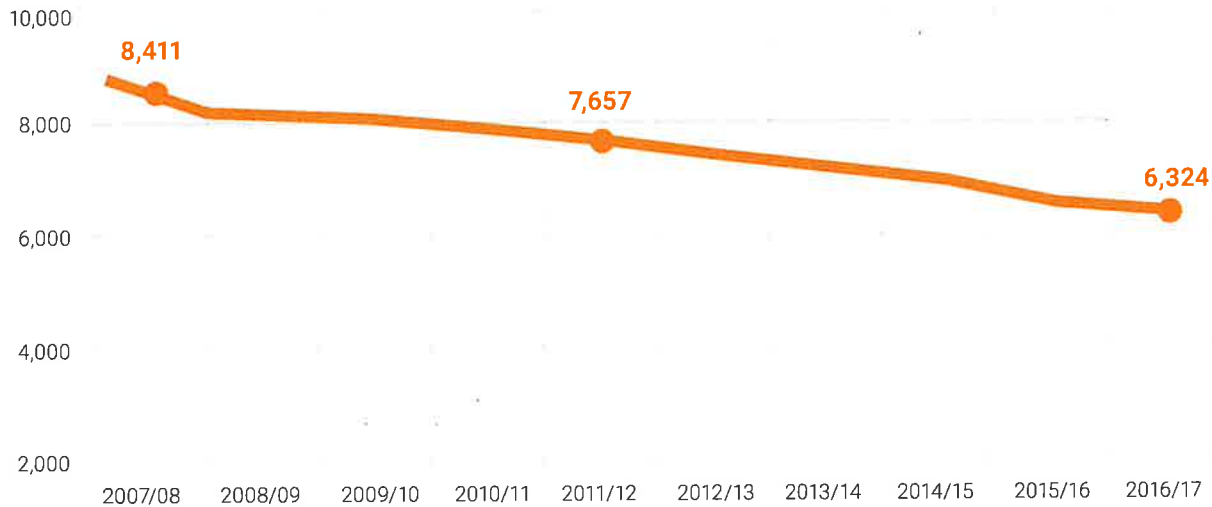
The number of children and youth in care (CYIC/on YAG) identified in the B.C. K-12 education system has decreased over the past decade.

**8,411** in 2007/08

**6,324** in 2016/17

Of the (approximately) 630,000 K-12 students in British Columbia in 2016/17, approximately 1% was in government care in the previous year. [SEE FIGURE 1].

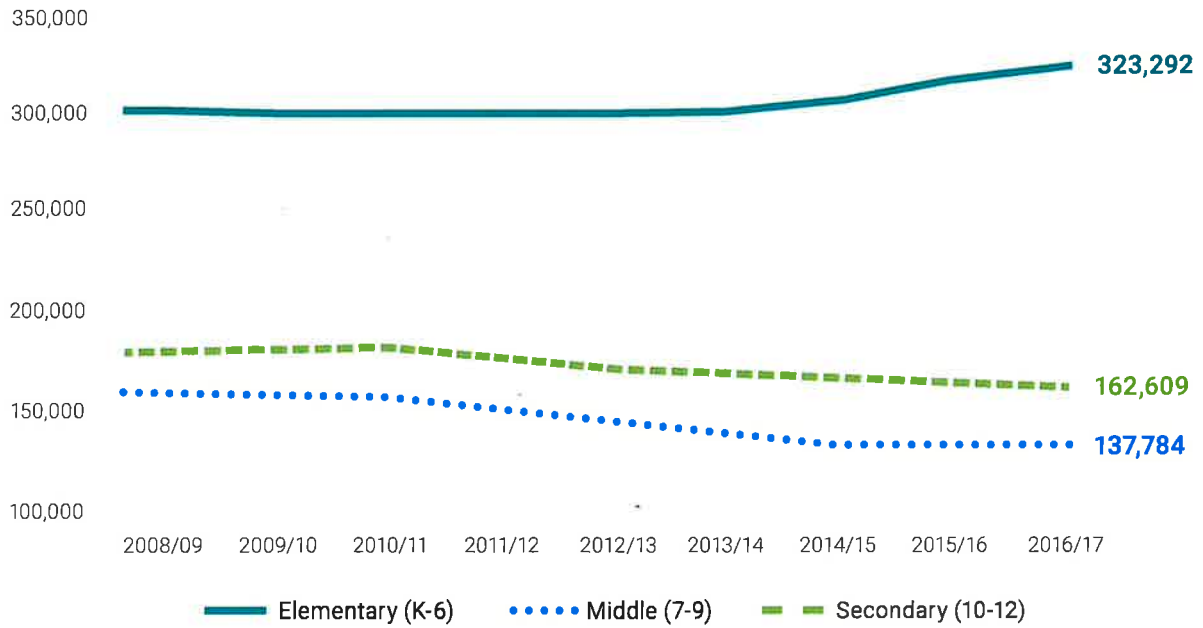
FIGURE 1. HEADCOUNT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE OVER TIME HAS DECREASED



Non-CYIC student headcounts in middle school (grades 7-9) and secondary school (grades 10-12) have decreased over the past 10 years (see Figure 2), while the elementary school (grades K- 6) population has increased by approximately 7% since 2008/09.

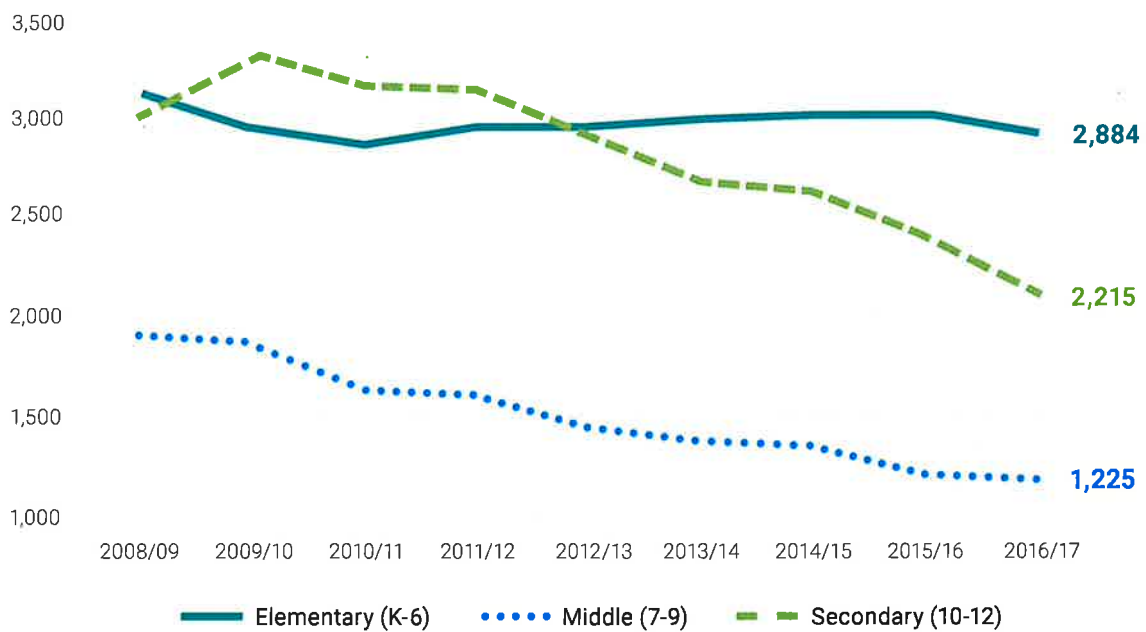


FIGURE 2. NON-CYIC STUDENTS BY GRADE



The headcount of elementary CYIC students has averaged around 3,000 students since 2008/09 (2,884 students in 2016/17); this is the largest group of children and youth in care in the B.C. school system. The headcount of middle school CYIC students has dropped 37% since 2008/09 to 2,215 students in 2016/17, and the headcount of secondary CYIC/on YAG students has decreased 20% in the same time frame to 1,225 students in 2016/17 (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. CYIC STUDENTS BY GRADE



There are a greater number of Indigenous students and students with diverse needs and abilities amongst children and youth in care than in the overall student population. While Indigenous students comprise 11% of the Non-CYIC cohort, in 2016/17 they represent 64% of CYIC/on YAG students. Similarly, while 10% of Non-CYIC students have special needs designations, in 2016/17 50% of the CYIC/on YAG population have special needs designations. Approximately 32% of all students in care in 2016/17 are both Indigenous and have diverse needs and abilities, compared to 2% of students who are not in care in 2016/17 (see Figure 4).

As noted above, while 10% of the Non-CYIC cohort has special needs designations, in 2016/17 50% of the CYIC/on YAG population have diverse abilities and disabilities. The most prevalent designations for CYIC/on YAG students are

Physical Disabilities and/or Chronic Health Impairments (37% of CYIC/on YAG students with diverse needs and abilities), Intensive Behaviour Interventions and/or Serious Mental Illness (30%), Autism Spectrum Disorder (9%) and Learning Disabilities (7%); together, these four designations account for 84% of CYIC/on YAG students with diverse needs and abilities. In the Non-CYIC student population, the most prevalent designations for diverse needs and abilities are Learning Disabilities (32% of Non-CYIC students with diverse needs and abilities), Autism Spectrum Disorder (16%), Physical Disabilities and/or Chronic Health Impairments (13%), and Intensive Behaviour Interventions and/or Serious Mental Illness (12%); together, these four designations account for 73% of Non-CYIC students with diverse abilities and disabilities.

FIGURE 4. PROPORTION OF INDIGENOUS AND DIVERSE NEEDS (DN) STUDENTS

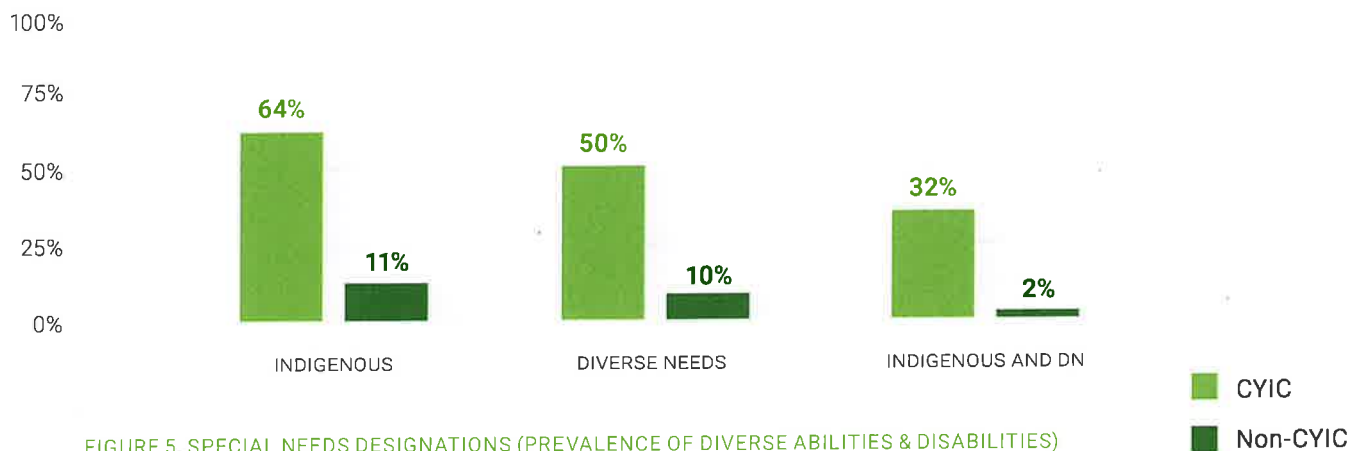
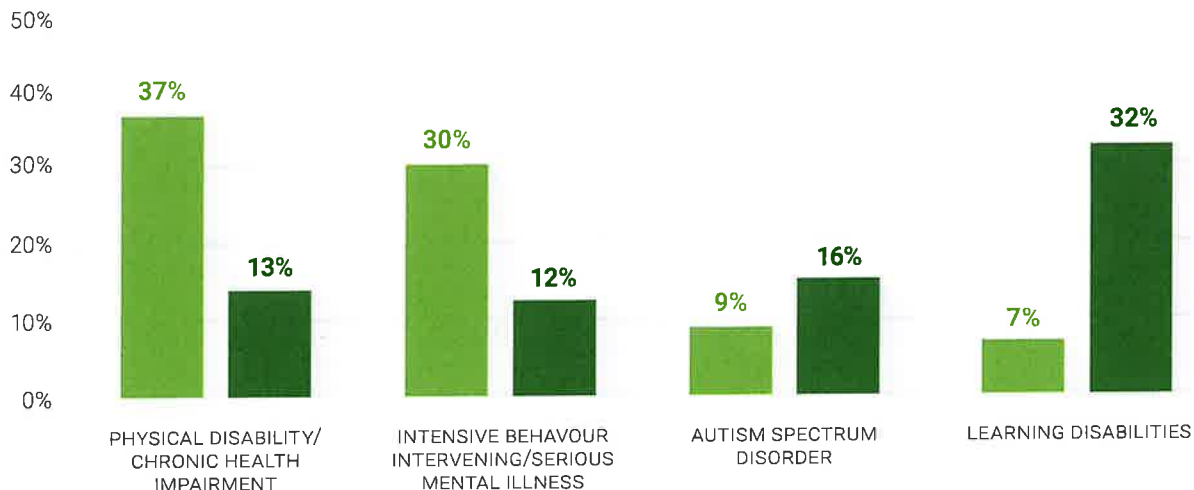


FIGURE 5. SPECIAL NEEDS DESIGNATIONS (PREVALENCE OF DIVERSE ABILITIES & DISABILITIES) FOR CYIC AND NON-CYIC STUDENTS



# Equipping the Educated Citizen



## HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

The mandate for the B.C. K-12 education system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. The mandate goes on to say that for the province to make progress towards its social and economic goals it requires well-educated citizens who have the ability to think clearly and critically, adapt to change, accept the tolerant and multifaceted nature of Canadian society, and who are motivated to participate actively in our democratic institutions.

## GOALS OF EDUCATION

The mandate of the education system is operationalized through three goals of education.



### 1. Intellectual Development

To develop the ability of students to analyze critically, reason and think independently, and acquire basic learning skills and bodies of knowledge; to develop in students a lifelong appreciation of learning, a curiosity about the world around them, and a capacity for creative thought and expression.



### 2. Human and Social Development

To develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative; to develop an appreciation of the fine arts and an understanding of cultural heritage; to develop an understanding of the importance of physical health and well-being; to develop a sense of social responsibility, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.



### 3. Career Development

To prepare students to attain their career and occupational objectives; to assist in the development of effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with change in the workplace.

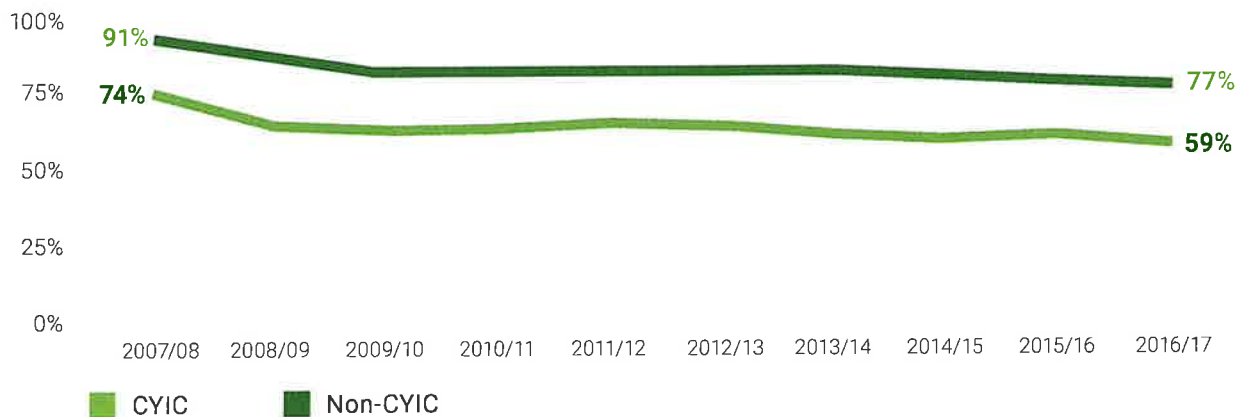


## INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

### *Foundational Skills Assessment Rates for Children and Youth in Care*

The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) is a province-wide assessment of reading, writing and numeracy skills administered annually to students in grades 4 and 7. FSA participation rates are 15 -20% lower for CYIC/on YAG students compared to Non-CYIC students (60-75% compared to 80-90%; see Figure 6 for FSA participation rates).

FIGURE 6. FSA NUMERACY PARTICIPATION RATES FOR CYIC & NON-CYIC STUDENTS (GRADES 4 AND 7 COMBINED)



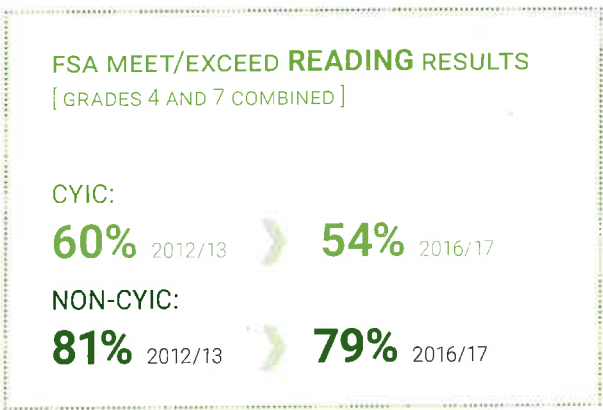
**FSA MEET/EXCEED NUMERACY RESULTS**  
[ GRADES 4 AND 7 COMBINED ]

**CYIC:**  
**47%** 2012/13 > **38%** 2016/17

**NON-CYIC:**  
**77%** 2012/13 > **75%** 2016/17

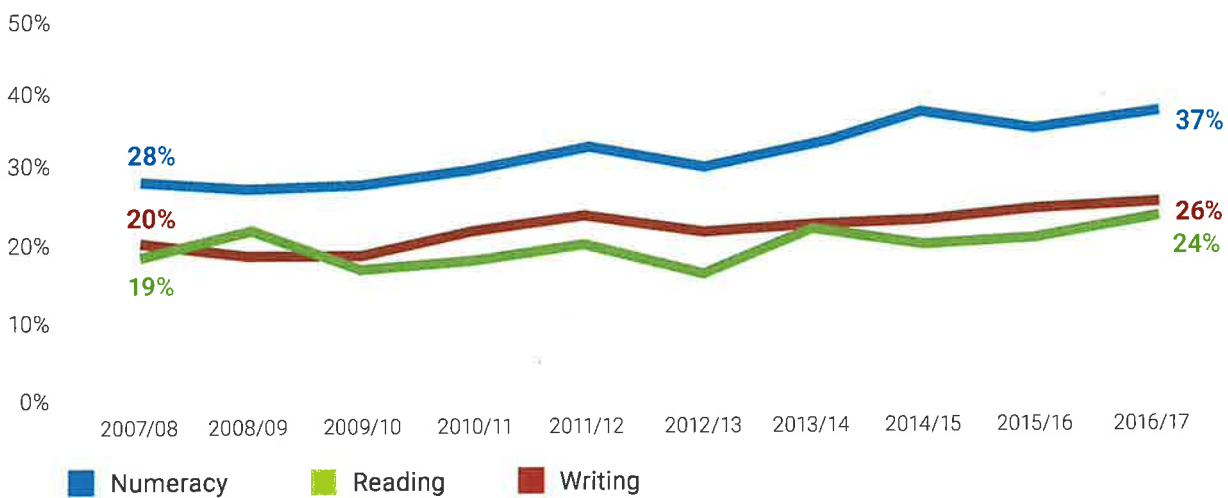
FSA "meet/exceed" rates for CYIC/on YAG students are significantly lower than those of Non-CYIC students, and this difference or gap has been increasing over time.

Of the 255 (Grade 4) and 210 (Grade 7) CYIC/on YAG students who participated in the Foundation Skills Assessment in 2016/17, fewer CYIC/on YAG students met or exceeded expectations compared to their Non-CYIC peers. This gap is most pronounced on the Numeracy FSA where CYIC/on YAG students have "meet/exceed" rates 37% lower than Non-CYIC students.

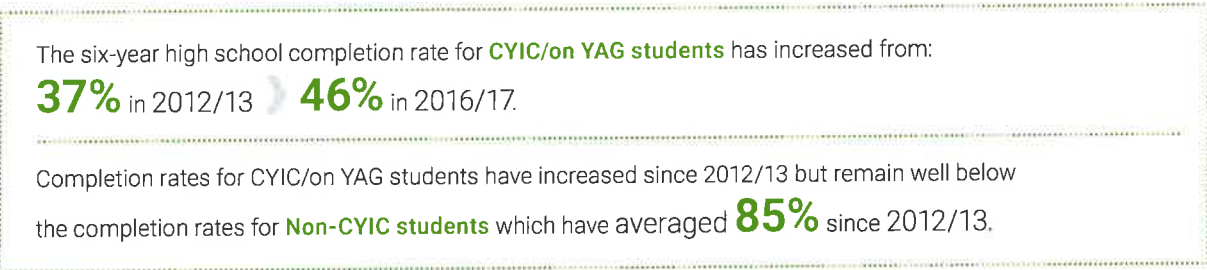


There is a 26 percentage point gap on the Reading assessment and a 24 point gap on the Writing assessment (not shown). The difference in "Meet/Exceed" rates for Non-CYIC and CYIC/on YAG students on all three FSA assessment measures has been increasing over time. As fewer children come into government care, the ones who do may have greater needs. It may be increasingly more difficult for CYIC to emulate Non-CYIC.

FIGURE 7. MEET/EXCEED DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN CYIC AND NON-CYIC STUDENTS (GRADES 4&7 COMBINED)



A key benchmark measure of timely educational completion is the six-year completion rate, or the number of B.C. students who have achieved a B.C. Certificate of Graduation ("Dogwood Diploma") within six years from the first time they enroll in Grade 8. While most students will complete high school within a five-year period, some students will take longer to graduate. Students in care may have disruptions to their educational path which may extend the time needed for them to graduate from high school.

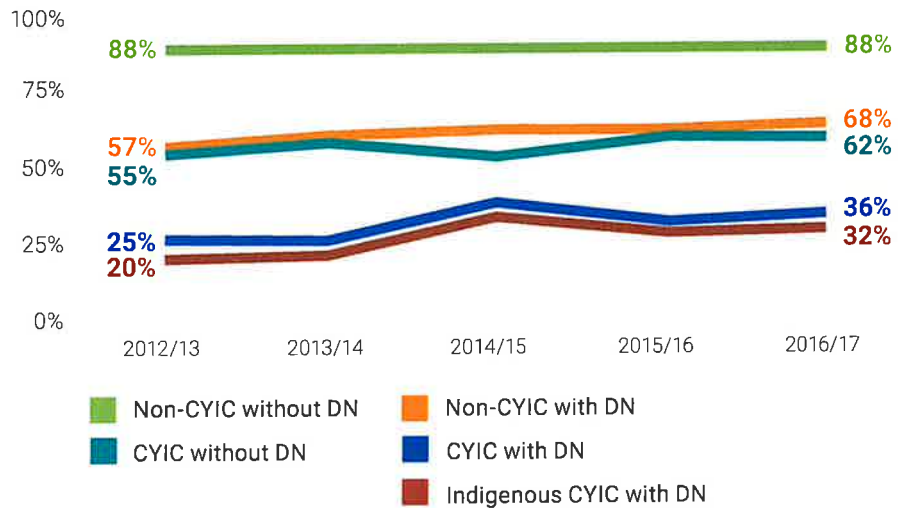


CYIC/on YAG students with special needs designations (50% of the CYIC/on YAG cohort) have considerably lower six-year completion rates.



The average six-year completion rate for CYIC/on YAG students is similar to the six-year completion rate for Non-CYIC students who have designated diverse abilities and disabilities.

FIGURE 8. SIX-YEAR COMPLETION RATES CYIC & NON-CYIC WITH & WITHOUT DIVERSE NEEDS



Students in care may have disruptions to their educational path which may extend the time needed for them to graduate from high school. Completion rates for CYIC/on YAG students over 7 to 8 years (providing an additional 1-2 years of schooling) are slightly higher than six-year completion rates for CYIC/on YAG students (41% in 6 years, 44% in 7 years, 43% in 8 years; calculated as an average of (6, 7, or 8-year completion) rates from 2010/11 to 2014/15).

There are two ways that students in British Columbia can officially complete their schooling:

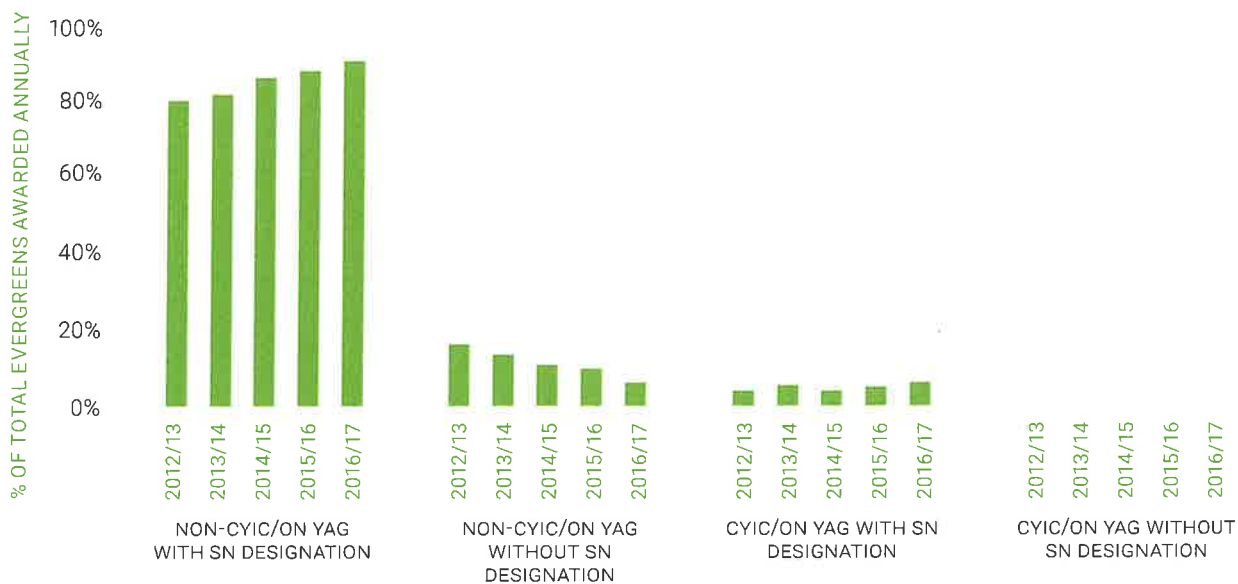
1. A Dogwood Diploma
2. B.C. School Completion Certificate (Evergreen Certificate)

*If they are not expected to graduate but satisfy the requirements of their Individual Education Plan.*

Since 2015, the Ministry of Education has updated its policy regarding the use of Evergreen Certificates to ensure these certificates are only issued to students with designated special needs who require an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Of students who received an Evergreen between 2012/13 and 2016/17, the majority were Non-CYIC/on YAG students who had Special Needs designations, and as a percentage of all Evergreens awarded annually this has increased from 80% in 2012/2013 to 89% in 2016/2017 (see Figure 9). A smaller proportion of Evergreen recipients were Non-CYIC/on YAG students without a Special Needs designation, and this percentage has decreased over time (from 16% in 2012/2013 to 6% in 2016/2017). CYIC/on YAG students who have Special Needs designations receive between 3% and 5% of Evergreens awarded annually, and there are consistently no Evergreens awarded to CYIC/on YAG without Special Needs designations.

FIGURE 9. EVERGREEN CERTIFICATES AWARDED BY SUB-POPULATION



## HUMAN AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

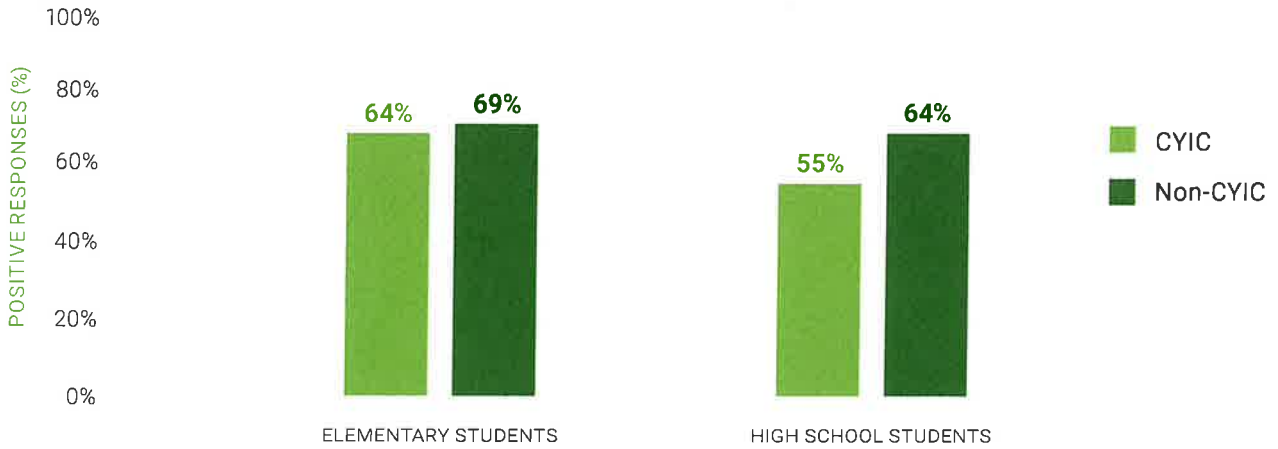
*Human and social development is a critical part of B.C.'s commitment to developing an educated citizen, including building a student's sense of self-worth, personal initiative, health and well-being.*

The 2017 *Room for Improvement* RCY report highlighted the critical need to ensure that children and youth in care receive supports that focus on their mental health and well-being. Through the Student Learning Survey, the Ministry of Education provides a lens on the mental health and well-being of all students across the province.

Launched in 2016, the Student Learning Survey (SLS) is administered annually to Grades 4, 7, 10 and 12 students (as well as parents and staff). The SLS is the largest survey instrument in B.C.'s education system and is calibrated to the best international evidence to explain student success. The survey provides deep insights into a student's social-emotional development among various other aspects of a student's life, providing a robust evidence-base with which to calibrate resources and improve outcomes.

In 2016/17, 44% of CYIC/on YAG students (in Grades 4, 7, 10 and 12) participated in the SLS compared to 59% of Non-CYIC students. CYIC/on YAG students had slightly lower positive response rates (e.g. "many times" or "all of the time") as compared to Non-CYIC students on questions related to a sense of belonging in school (see Figure 10, "Do you feel welcome in school?" and Figure 11, "Is school a place where you feel like you belong?").

FIGURE 10. PROPORTION OF CYIC & NON-CYIC STUDENTS WHO FELT WELCOME AT SCHOOL % REPORTING MANY TIMES/ALL OF THE TIME (SLS, 2016/17)



While there is no difference between elementary CYIC/on YAG students and elementary Non-CYIC students in reporting that adults in their school treat all students fairly, fewer high school CYIC/on YAG students are likely to positively respond to the question than their Non-CYIC peers (see Figure 12).

FIGURE 11. PROPORTION OF CYIC & NON-CYIC STUDENTS WHO FELT THEY BELONGED AT SCHOOL (SLS, 2016/17)

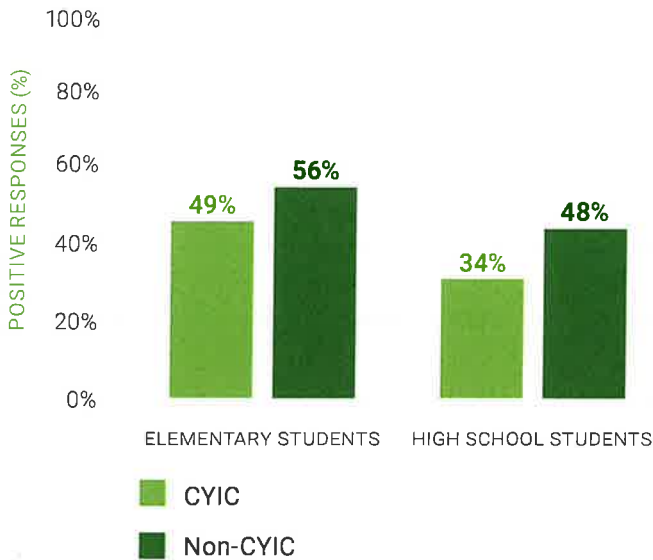
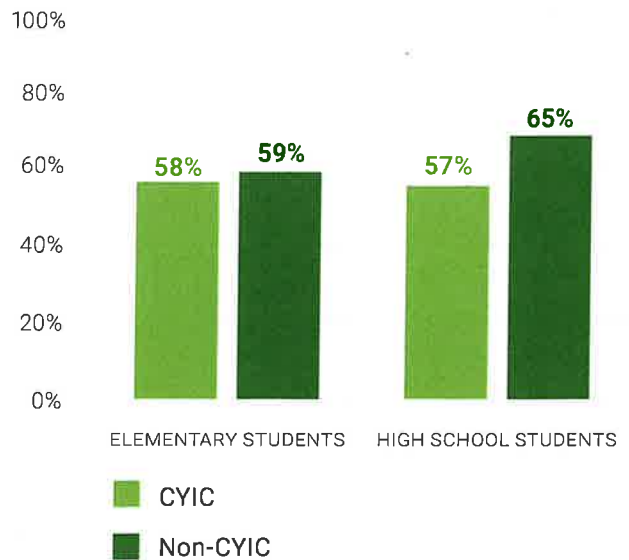


FIGURE 12. PROPORTION OF CYIC & NON-CYIC STUDENTS WHO REPORT THAT ADULTS AT THEIR SCHOOL TREAT ALL STUDENTS FAIRLY (SLS, 2016/17)





Slightly more elementary CYIC/on YAG students than elementary Non-CYIC students reported having three or more adults at school that care about them.

**64%** CYIC elementary students    **61%** Non-CYIC elementary students  
**52%** CYIC high school students    **54%** Non-CYIC high school students

Feelings of belonging and school connectedness benefit students and schools, as students who feel connected will have an increase in motivation, classroom engagement, and school attendance, which translates to higher overall academic performance. Having a caring adult in the school community fosters school connectedness and a sense of belonging for students. Blum writes:

*Connections spring instead from individual action on the part of both teachers and administrators as well as from more elusive factors, such as school environment... Although school connectedness might suggest smaller class sizes, the classroom's culture seems to matter more than its size does. Effective teachers can create connectedness in the classroom in a number of ways. When teachers make learning meaningful and relevant to their students' lives, students develop a stake in their own education.* (Blum, R. 2005 – A Case for School Connectedness)

On measures of physical health, CYIC/on YAG students are more likely to report getting a good night's sleep (see Figure 13) than are Non-CYIC students; the gap is similar for all age groups. Older CYIC/on YAG students are less likely to eat fresh vegetables 6 days a week or every day than their Non-CYIC peers, although the trend is evident at the elementary level to a lesser extent (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 13. PROPORTION OF CYIC & NON-CYIC STUDENTS WHO REPORTED HAVING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP (SLS, 2016/17)

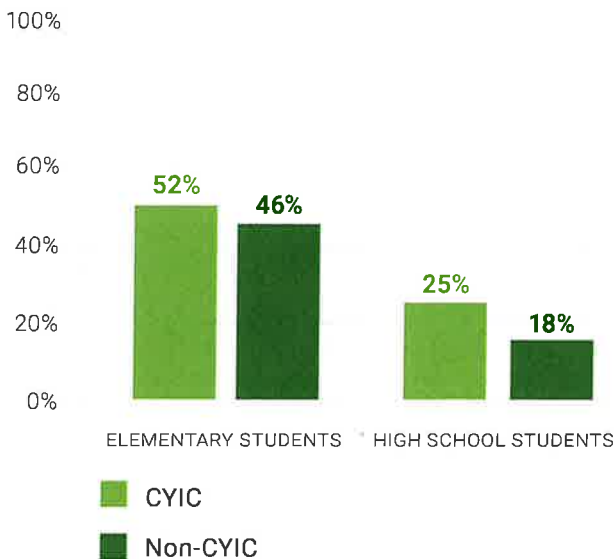
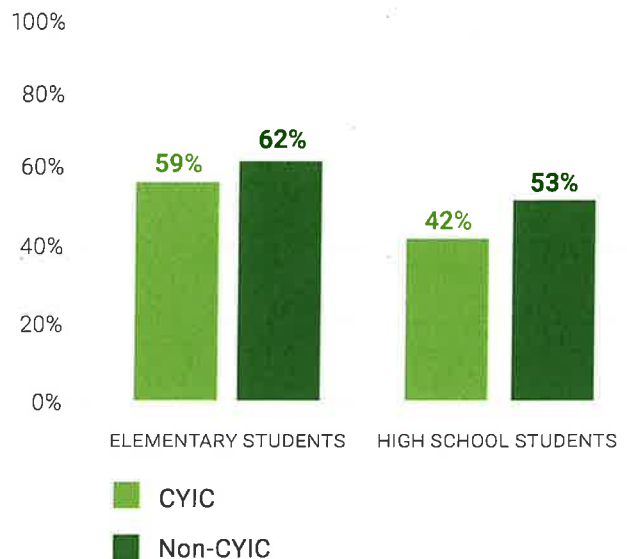


FIGURE 14. PROPORTION OF CYIC & NON-CYIC STUDENTS WHO REPORT HAVING REGULAR ACCESS TO NUTRITIONAL FOOD (SLS, 2016/17)





Because the pace of social, economic and environmental change is increasing, there is a greater need for students to have essential skills, adaptability, global competencies and citizenship, and ultimately successful transitions to employment.

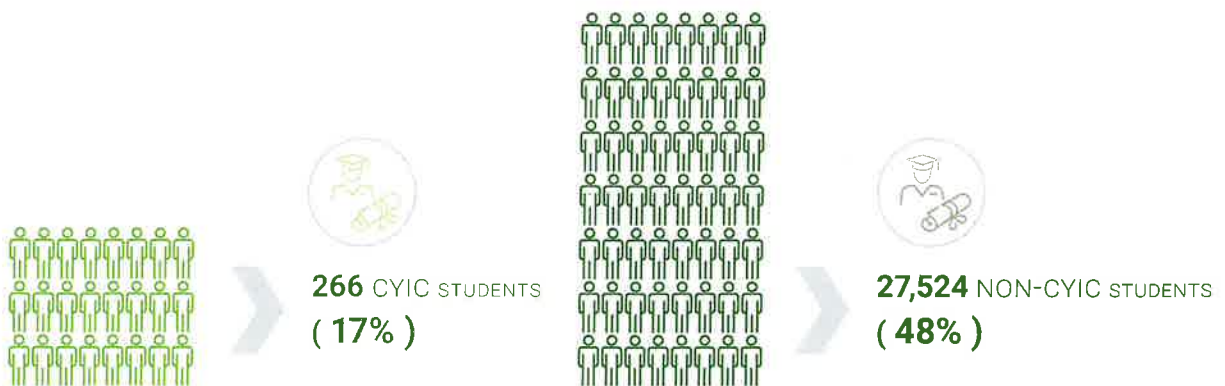
## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

B.C.'s education system strives to prepare students for lifelong learning, encourage the use of technology, and be able to meet the expectations of employers and post-secondary institutions.

The Student Transitions Project is a cross-ministry initiative to use Personal Education Numbers (PENs) to track B.C. students across K-12 and into the B.C. public post-secondary system. This information is used for program planning and management and to better support students in transitioning successfully into post-secondary education.

Post-secondary transitions refer to the proportion of B.C. students who transition into B.C. public post-secondary institutions following their graduation from high school. The transition rate within three years of graduation from high school (the "three-year cumulative transition rate") for CYIC/on YAG students was 31% lower than for Non-CYIC students who graduated in 2013/14 and transitioned into post-secondary by 2016/17 (17% compared to 48%; see Figure 15).

FIGURE 15. POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION OF CYIC AND NON-CYIC STUDENTS WITHIN 3 YEARS (BY 2016/17)





## Conclusion

### OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SUCCESS

This paper was written in response to one of six recommendations laid out in the October 2017 RCY report *Room for Improvement: Toward Better Education Outcomes for Children in Care*: to publicly report on educational outcomes of children and youth in government care. The Ministry of Education strives to equip all students in B.C. with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop their individual potential and become educated citizens. Children and youth in government care face exceptional circumstances in their lives; for children and youth in care to thrive, government, schools, families and communities need to work together to ensure children are adequately supported to reach their goals. The Ministry of Education remains committed to continuing to improve the educational outcomes for all children, including children and youth in government care across the province.

# Appendix - A

## STUDY POPULATION AND DATA MATCHING

This report is based on identified B.C. public or independent school students who were in care or under a youth agreement (see Page 2 for full definition) between Oct. 1st and Sept 30th of the previous year (i.e.: students during the 2016/17 school year who were in care during between Oct 1, 2015 – Sept 30, 2016).

Students aged 5-19 years old were included in the current analysis; students participating in Adult Programs were excluded from the current report. As defined in the *School Act*, "school age" means the age between the date on which a person is permitted under section 3 (1) to enroll in an educational program provided by a board and the end of the school year in which the person reaches the age of 19 years.

Educational data was matched by MCFD (Ministry of Children and Family Development) based on student name, gender and birth date.

This report includes students in care and youth on youth agreements and interim and temporary custody agreements.

The educational outcomes (6-8 year completion rates; proportion of Dogwood and Evergreen certificates achieved) of students in care were based on students who had been in care at least once between 1998 and 2016; "CYIC Ever."

Youth who are 19 years of age cannot be in care of the government; therefore, MCFD reports on CYIC and Youth Agreements up to and including age 18. The CFCSA definition of CYIC does not include Youth Agreements. This report includes Youth Agreements in its cohort. MCFD includes some, but not all, interim and temporary custody orders; this report includes all interim and temporary custody orders.

# Appendix - B

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## How are we doing?

Children *and* Youth in Government Care  
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