



Alternative Family Services Foster Learning 2026 Campaign to Address Educational Inequities Facing Youth in Foster Care

SAN LEANDRO, CA, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Alternative Family Services](#) (AFS) is proud to again run its annual Foster Learning 2026 campaign with the theme "Connected to Learn. Supported to Thrive." The fundraising initiative aims to raise \$10,000 by September 15, 2026, to provide critical educational resources and support services for children and youth in foster care throughout Northern California.

The campaign comes amid persistent educational disparities affecting foster youth in California. According to state data, only 66.6% of students in foster care graduate from high school within four years, compared with 87.7% of students not in foster care. The four-year dropout rate for foster youth stands at 20.7%, which is nearly three times the 7.8% rate for their peers. And their suspension rate is 13.4%, which is more than four times higher than the 2.9% rate for non-foster students. Perhaps most concerning, while 61.8% of young people transitioning from foster care have enrolled in college by approximately age 23, only 9.6% have completed a degree.

"Educational success depends on more than what happens in the classroom," said Marsha Lewis-Akyeem, CEO of Alternative Family Services. "Children and young people in care also need access to the right tools, meaningful opportunities, emotional support, and trusted people who believe in their potential."

Campaign Supports Holistic Student Needs

Funds raised through the Foster Learning 2026 campaign will be allocated flexibly to meet individual student needs, including:

- Tutoring services for personalized academic support
- Technology including laptops and tablets to ensure equitable access to digital learning
- Adaptive learning tools and sensory-friendly materials for students with diverse learning needs
- Therapeutic support to help students manage emotional well-being alongside academic progress

- Essential school supplies, backpacks, and clothing
- Housing assistance for transition-age youth whose educational continuity depends on stable living situations

The donation structure demonstrates tangible impact at various giving levels:

- \$50 provides a backpack for one student
- \$100 provides clothing and shoes for one student
- \$250 covers a laptop for equitable access to learning
- \$500 provides tuition assistance for one young person
- \$1,000 provides housing assistance for two transition-age youth

Success Stories Demonstrate Campaign Impact

The campaign highlights real-world examples of how targeted support transforms outcomes. KJ*, a 10-year-old who entered AFS's Enhanced Independent Short-Term Foster Care (E-ISFC) program in January 2026, struggled with intense emotional dysregulation that led to unsafe behaviors and repeated hospitalizations.

Rather than focusing only on observable behaviors, KJ's AFS team sought to understand what his actions communicated and how they could help him feel safer and more connected. During an intense episode in early 2026, his caseworker discovered that music and movement offered KJ a pathway to regulation. After watching Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video together, KJ found an unexpected outlet for expression and calm.

Since March 2026, KJ has not required another hospitalization. What began as a favorite music video evolved into an integral component of his individualized care plan—demonstrating how flexible, responsive support can unlock new possibilities for healing and growth.

*"KJ's name has been changed to protect his identity."

A Longstanding Commitment to Vulnerable Families

Founded in 1978, Alternative Family Services has built a reputation as a trusted county partner in serving youth with complex needs across Northern California. The organization provides foster care, adoption, and mental health services with a focus on stability, safety, and family well-being. AFS is COA-accredited and holds accreditation from Candid, among other recognitions.

"Our approach recognizes that every student learns differently," added Lewis-Akyeem. "Some need tutoring. Others need technology, sensory-friendly materials, therapeutic support, or housing stability. Every gift to Foster Learning helps connect a child or young person with the specific resources they need to succeed."

How to Support

Community members can support the Foster Learning 2026 campaign, which runs until September 15, 2026, through several channels:

Donate online: <https://wl.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E362193&id=1>

Share campaign materials: <https://www.afs4kids.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Foster-Loster-Learning-2026.pdf>

Contact AFS directly: (800) 300-1022 or info@afs4kids.org

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