

# IMPACT REPORT

**FIRST STAR**  
**ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY ACADEMY**  
**2023- 2024**

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*ACADEMY DIRECTOR: STACEY WIGGINS*





#### First Star's Mission:

First Star provides high school youth in foster care with the opportunity, tools, and support to successfully transition to self-sufficiency through higher education or other viable pathways.

#### First Star's Vision:

We envision a world where youth in foster care have equitable opportunities to acquire education and skills to achieve fulfilling and productive adult lives.

First Star's Academies are a long-term college-prep program for high school foster youth. We keep our scholars on track for high school graduation and prepare them for higher education and adulthood by providing specialized programming that addresses the academics, life skills, and adult supports unique to students in foster care.



Want to get involved or become a partner? Please reach out to the Academy Director using the contact information below!

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STAR-ACADEMY/](https://childwelfare.ilinoisstate.edu/first-star-academy/)

## ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT:

We at Illinois State University work as a diverse community of scholars with a commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. We promote the highest academic standards in our teaching, scholarship, public service, and the connections we build among them. We devote all of our resources and energies to creating the most supportive and productive community possible to serve the citizens of Illinois and beyond.

# The Academy Model

## ACADEMY PROGRAMMING INCLUDES...



### MONTHLY ACADEMIES

Monthly programming over four years for youth in foster care focused on academics and life skills while they are in high school.

### CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

Seminars and workshops that provide tools to caregivers to become advocates for their youth.

### STEAM ACADEMY

Virtual Tech Talks and access to labs that focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math.

### ALUMNI PROGRAM

Offered to scholars who graduate the Academy as a resource during their transition to adulthood.

### SCHOLAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Leadership opportunity for scholars focused on becoming civically engaged and enacting change in their local communities.

### SUMMER ACADEMY

Intensive 2-4 week residential enrichment program on a university campus.

### VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Weekly mentoring and tutoring sessions, as well as an open environment to connect and build community through virtual hangouts.



## Media Handles



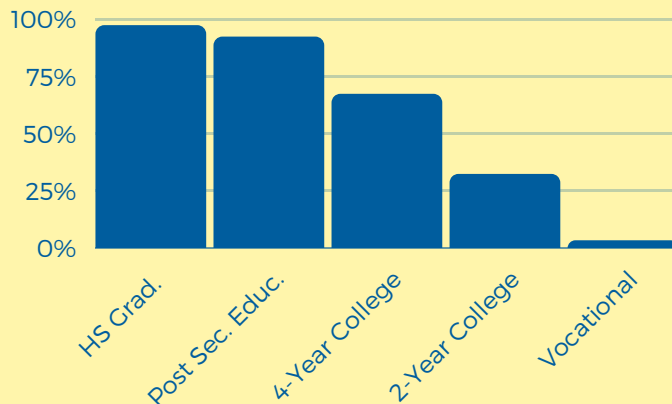
Please follow our social media and stay connected with our academies and alumni programs



# FIRST STAR SCHOLARS ARE BEATING THE ODDS

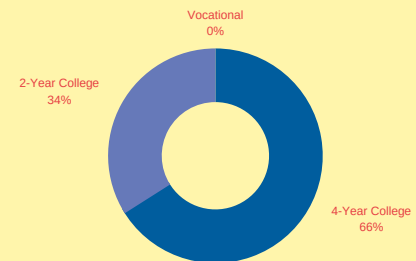
## NATIONAL GRADUATING CLASS

2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

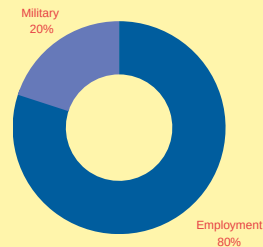


All data above and to the right is representative of internal data collected by First Star National and all data is self-reported by Academy Directors.

## POST SECONDARY EDUCATION



## NON POST SECONDARY EDUCATION



## 2023 STEAM

This summer First Star hosted the summer campaign First Star "STEAM in the Summer" Day, a fun, collaborative, interactive day of scholarly engagement in science, engineering, technology, arts, and mathematics. 100 % of our participating academies accessed the grant funding to support scholar participation in STEAM programming for Spring or Summer of this year. ISU scholars participated by doing the bottle rocket challenge. with the provided materials.



## CELEBRATING SCHOLAR VOICE



The First Star Scholar Advisory Committee created a podcast series titled the Scholar Voice Podcast where they engaged in dialogue around advocacy and leadership development to build community with foster youth across the network.

The podcast is housed on our Youtube page, check it out!

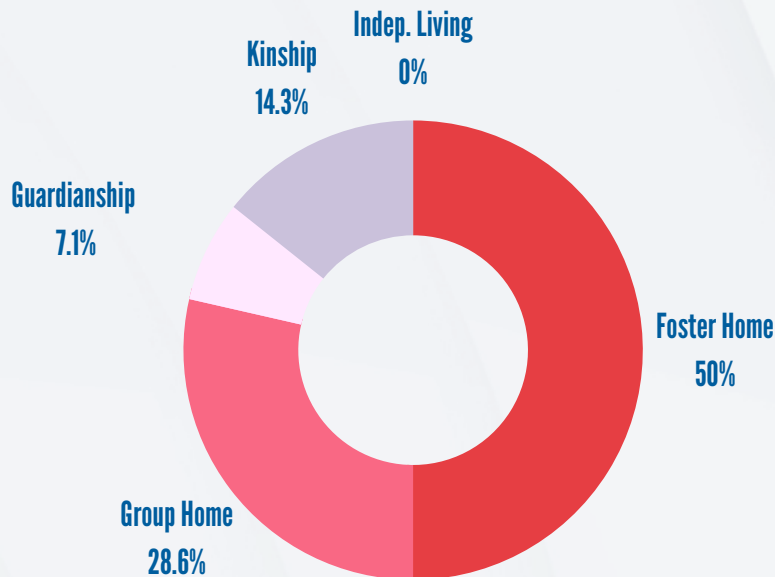


The First Star Alumni Program's goal is to remain connected and ensure Alumni have access to resources and the First Star network as they transition into adulthood, career, and advanced education.

- 63% of the 2023 graduating class enrolled in the Alumni Program
- The 2023 Alumni Awards Show awarded our largest graduating senior class and almost 30 Alumni during our annual community celebration in June 2023

# FIRST STAR ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY ACADEMY DATA

## Scholar Data



|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Foster Home                       | 70% |
| Group Home                        | 0%  |
| Reunified with Biological Parents | 0%  |
| Adopted                           | 0%  |
| Guardianship                      | 10% |
| Kinship Care                      | 20% |
| Indep. Living / Emanc.            | 0%  |
| Other                             | 0%  |

### GENDER IDENTIFICATION



### RACE/ETHNICITY



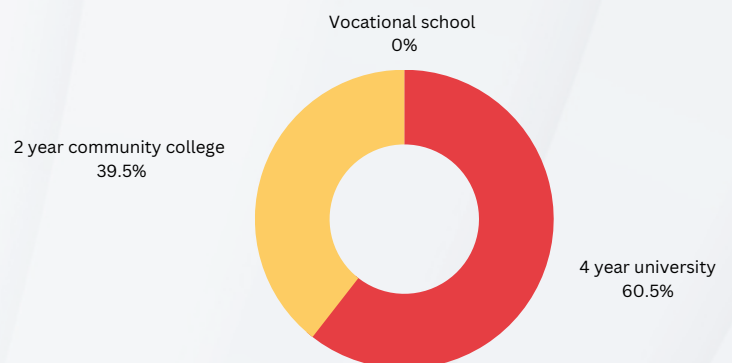
### GRADE LEVEL



## CLASS OF 2023

**100% of First Star ISU Academy seniors graduated from high school in 2023!**

**100% of FS ISU graduates are pursuing higher education opportunities and 25% are attending Illinois State University in the fall!**



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Academics - Mathematics, Language Arts, Science and SAT  
Prep classes  
Teambuilding Activities - led by Youth Coach mentor staff

Lifeskills - Social Emotional Learning, Dance, Financial Literacy,  
Power Chats, Art, and Career Exploration workshops



## Alumni Spotlight

Meet ISU scholar, Seth, who is also part of the Young Leaders in Action in his community. Seth hopes to obtain a doctorate degree in physics and be a physicist in the future. He thanks Professor Matthew Caplan, an astrophysicist at ISU who he met over the summer, for being his biggest inspiration.

## SUMMER ACADEMY SPOTLIGHT

### SCHOLAR TESTIMONIALS

It means that I can be successful. I am not a statistic. What First Star means is a better opportunity for me to achieve my goals, advocacy for youth in care success in and out of college. First Star means hope for the children in care to be able to become something other than a statistic and learn from the setbacks. I am interested in going to an HBCU and majoring in law or nursing."

"First Star means family, a place you can trust one another and love each other. Before First Star I wasn't sure if I wanted to come, now I am glad I did."

### ISU Academy hosted Monthly Sessions

Session 1:  
JUNE 4th - JUNE 18th



### City of Bloomington Careers

First Star Scholars had the opportunity to collaborate with the city of Bloomington career exploration programs. Scholars got to explore various careers such as electricians, firefighters, and ambulance EMT's.



### Partnership with the Special Olympics

Special Olympics: Scholars were given the opportunity to volunteer with the special olympics.

