



**Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee
Truancy & Dropout Workgroup
2/26/08**

This packet contains handouts that were distributed at the Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee/Truancy & Dropout Workgroup meeting on February 26, 2008 and includes the following items:

- Memo from Bill Scheu (chairman, Truancy & Dropout Workgroup) to Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee

TO: Chairman W.C. Gentry and Members of the Education, Literacy, Truancy and Dropout committee of the Jacksonville Journey

FROM: Chairman Bill Scheu and Members of the Truancy and Dropout Workgroup

DATE: February 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Subcommittee Recommendations

The Truancy and Dropout Prevention subcommittee recommends a collaborative approach to developing effective prevention and intervention programs to improve attendance and decrease the dropout rate. The subcommittee presents the following recommendations for consideration by the full committee that hold promise for reducing the truancy crisis and decreasing the dropout rate in Duval County. Each of these recommendations includes an overview of the proposed solution, identifies the lead design and implementation agency, and has a fiscal note.

Truancy Prevention

Recommendation # 1 Hiring and Deployment of 30 additional Attendance Social Workers.

Duval County Public Schools delivery model is service oriented. Truant behavior is an indication of educational, social, and/or economic problems. Targeted interventions are provided to students to reduce truancy. Hiring, training, and deploying 30 additional attendance social workers will reduce the number of schools served by staff members, increase personal contact and follow-up with truant students, and promises to reduce the number of students who have missed 20+ school days from the current number of 17,000 students.

During the 2007-2008 school year DCPS has worked with its combined staff of truant officers and attendance social workers. Staff has been reallocated to decrease the number of schools served by each staff member (Table 1).

Staff Ratio	2006-2007	Staff Ratio	2007-2008	Proposed 2008-2009
District Wide	10 Staff	District	17 Staff	38 Staff

(159 Schools)	Avg. 15.9 Schools	Wide (147 Schools)	Avg. 9 Schools	Avg. 4 Schools
Priority Schools (7 Schools)	13 Staff Avg. 2 staff per school	16 Turn around Schools	7 Staff Avg. 2 Schools	16 Staff 1 School per staff member
Truancy Centers (4 sites)	11 Staff Avg. 3 staff per site	Truancy Centers (4 sites)	8 Staff Avg. 2 staff per site	8 Staff Avg. 2 staff per site

DCPS should be the lead development and implementation agency for truancy. Better alignment with governmental, JSO and State Attorney's office, and community wide partners will be necessary in order to create a lattice of support services that meets the needs of students and families.

Fiscal Note: The anticipated salary and benefits of each social worker will be \$60K. The cost of this recommendation will be \$1.8 Million annually. The total five year investment is \$9 million. DCPS will incur coordination of services, recruitment, training, and equipment expenses

Recommendation #2 Identification, alignment and coordination of community resources to support elimination of truancy.

Jacksonville has numerous community based and governmental organizations that in their own manner attempt to address truancy problems. Truancy should not be viewed as a cause but a symptom of more serious individual, family and community conditions. It is the recommendation of the subcommittee that we identify promising strategies and resources from these organizations. Coordination of strategies and bringing resources to scale is critical to ensuring that truant students receive the services they need to address the cause(s) of their truancy.

United Way of Northeast Florida should be the lead agency for aligning resources to address the needs of truant students. The agency currently published a social service resource guide; operates United Way 2-1-1, a 24-hour helpline providing information and referrals for social services and management of a community database of services; and is the lead partner for the Full Service Schools of Jacksonville collaboration. Full Service Schools of Jacksonville (FSS) is a United Way-led collaboration aimed at removing the barriers to student success. This collaboration

consists of Jacksonville Children's Commission, Duval County Public Schools, Duval County health Department, other funders and non-profit agency service providers all committed to service delivery to address the medical needs, mental health and behavioral needs, social service needs and positive youth programming needs to give students the opportunity to make the best use of their education. FSS exists in eight different communities: Arlington, Beaches, Englewood, Greater Springfield, Paxon, Ribault, Sandalwood and Westside. These neighborhoods were selected because of their high risk factors and low protective factors for students and families. FSS is working with 78 different schools where 45% of the students of Duval County Public Schools are enrolled. Last year, FSS served over 28,000 people through all services including counseling, medical services, after-school activities and school-sponsored activities funded with FSS grants.

A Full Service Schools experienced social worker is needed to meet with the 30 Attendance Social Workers to provide case staffing and assist in connecting the families served by the Attendance Social Workers to community resources including Full Service Schools of Jacksonville. This intervention promises to assist the Attendance Social Workers in connecting families to community resources to address the cause(s) of their truancy and prevent truancy in the future.

Fiscal Note: The anticipated salary and benefits of the experienced social worker to coordinate resources for the families of truant students is \$65,000 annually for a total five-year investment of \$325,000. United Way will incur recruitment, training, supplies, equipment and other operational expenses. In addition, this strategy could result in greater demand for existing community services greater than the current capacity of these services resulting in the need for additional funds to underwrite the cost of expanded services.

Recommendation #3 Development of Community Action Truancy Team

Galvanizing Jacksonville around the truancy crisis will require a team of concerned citizens to engage the community in this effort. Maintaining awareness and concentrating resources on those students most in need of intervention would be the focus of this team.

The State Attorney's Office (SAO) would be the lead agency in creating and maintaining the truancy team. The team would consist of Duval County Public Schools, the State Attorney's Office, Youth Crisis Center, United Way of Northeast Florida, The Chamber of Commerce and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office which are statutorily charged with addressing truancy. The Community Action Truancy Team would coordinate with non-profit agencies to assure that the children and their families received services. The goal of this team would be to address truancy on an individual and community level. In order to effectively combat the problem on an individual level, a crucial component would be a "war room" atmosphere where members of the team meet regularly throughout the

school year to monitor truant students at all school levels. On a community level, Jacksonville United Against Truancy should be the entity through which information is dispersed for purposes of community awareness and education. The experience of JUAT in focusing the community on this issue is critical.

The development of this team would require a Memorandum of Understanding between the participating agencies.

Fiscal Note: The cost of developing and maintaining the Truancy Team is \$75,000 annually for a five year investment of \$375,000. These costs include research, labor, printing, conducting community meetings, and distribution. The truancy team will largely be staffed by the members of JUAT mentioned above with the addition of a Truancy Team Coordinator.

Dropout Prevention

Every year in Duval County approximately 2,800 students drop out of school. Most of them drift out of school through lack of attendance and are dropped from the rolls after turning 16 due to excessive absences. Research indicates that dropping out of high school is the end of a long process of disengagement. This process is marred by social problems at home, lack of connection to school, mental health problems and lack of support pushing students toward graduation. This disengagement is noticed through poor behavior and low academic achievement in addition to truancy. Middle school is the focus of the drop out prevention services because research indicates that middle school is when these signs of dropping out begin to fully manifest.

Recommendation #4 United Way – Achievers For Life

Achievers For Life is a prevention strategy developed by United Way resulting from 11 months of research by community stakeholders including DCF, The Community Foundation, School Board members, JSO, Department of Children and Families and community leaders.

Achievers For Life is a four-pronged strategy to address the root causes of dropping out: student's lack of attachment to school, problems at home, repeated academic failure and no one pushing the student to complete school. These causes are addressed through:

- Family Advocates - work with families to address obstacles to excelling in school: mental health/behavioral problems, financial instability, employment, housing.
- Achievement Advocates - paid and volunteer Achievement Advocates work with the students for two years. They are provided

information regarding their assigned student's grades, classroom behavior and attendance, and with professional assistance will help the child achieve mutually established goals

- Counseling through Full Service Schools – Eight Full Service Schools are serving a total of 78 schools and approximately 3,000 children annually through counseling services
- Parent Engagement - Principals are provided financial resources to implement research-based, measurable, school-wide strategies to keep students and their families engaged in learning. Potential initiatives include: family orientation to middle school, teacher training and development, homeroom teachers serving as family liaisons throughout middle school, parent leadership development, welcoming front offices, and any other research-based parent engagement models

These services are currently being piloted by United Way in Arlington and Fort Caroline Middle Schools (Terry Parker high school feeder pattern). Services began in October 2007. Although all data is not in for the second grading period, early preliminary results indicate success. 30% of Achievers For Life students showed improvement in GPA and 40% of students showed improvement in attendance in the second grading period as compared to the first.

Fiscal Note: The cost of bringing Achievers For Life to a high school feeder pattern is approximately \$350,000 per year. This level of funding provides services to approximately 150 families annually. Some high schools have a much higher student population resulting in additional resources to adequately serve the students. United Way will maintain its long-term investment in Arlington and Ft. Caroline middle schools feeding into Terry Parker High School.

Approximate annual investment for expansion:

- 2008 - \$750,000 for two high school feeder patterns
- 2009 - \$1,900,000 for three additional high school feeder patterns
- 2010 - \$2,600,000 for two additional high school feeder patterns
- 2011 – \$2,600,000 for seven total high school feeder patterns
- 2012 - \$2,600,000 for seven total high school feeder patterns

Outcomes:

- Achievers For Life services provided at 17 middle schools by 2010, seven additional high school feeder patterns
- Estimated 5,150 families with children on the track to dropping out, diverted toward high school graduation during 2008 - 2012
- The Achievers For life partnership consisting of community experts will review the initial results data and establish long-term success targets regarding dropout and graduation.

Recommendation #5 The Community Foundation

Making the Move: Transitions to Middle School

Helping students transition from elementary to middle school reduces the disengagement factors that lead to dropping out. Research shows that students often struggle with major transitions in their educational continuum – from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. The transition from elementary to middle is particularly difficult because it coincides with the student's passage through the turbulent adolescent years. It is during this transition that students begin to disengage from school or deepen disengagement that began earlier. This is evident in poor grades, poor attendance and poor behavior.

The Community Foundation's local research revealed that the academic and behavioral performance of Duval County middle school students was significantly poorer – year after year – than that of elementary students. National research shows that the process of dropping out begins in sixth grade but can be stemmed with appropriate whole school prevention and more targeted early intervention. Transition programs that help support students during this critical time lead to better outcomes in attendance, behavior and academic performance and prevent the dropout process from ever beginning.

The cost per school is \$15,000 for a four-day camp to precede the first day of school. The camp familiarizes new students with the school campus, teachers, classrooms and procedures as well as provides student and teacher team building and other fun activities that build confidence and relationships.

Fiscal Note: Implementation of Making the Move Middle School Transitions would be phased to coincide with Achievers For Life expansion.

- 2008 - \$105,000 for seven middle schools
- 2009 – \$240,000 for nine additional middle schools
- 2010 – \$345,000 for seven additional middle school
- 2011 - \$345,000
- 2012 - \$345,000

The results of Kirby Smith's program in the first nine weeks of 2006-2007 are striking: Discipline referrals for sixth graders dropped 73% from 1800 in 2005-06 to 500 in 2006-2007. Similar results would be expected for all middle schools.

Making the Move: Transitions to High School

Ninth grade is one of the last opportunities to turn around students who are off track before the dropout. Thirteen of DCPS' 18 high schools received a D or F in 2007 and have graduation rates of 50% or less. Graduation rates are low

because at risk students enter high school poorly prepared for success, have long histories of failure and rarely or barely make it out of 9th grade. If students fail 9th grade, only 10-15% go on to graduate.

Middle to high school transition programs increase the chances ninth graders will be successful by introducing them to the high school environment during eight grade, providing a summer bridge for low performing students and providing year round support through teacher advisors, mentors and guidance counselors.

The Community Foundation will pilot Transitions to High School at Terry Parker this spring. If positive outcomes are achieved in attendance, GPA, behavior and on-time promotion, the Truancy and Dropout Prevention committee will recommend replication and expansion through the Jacksonville Journey to follow the expansion plans of Achievers For Life and Making the Move Transitions to Middle School.

Program Design:

Program Objective

Improve outcomes for in-coming 9th grade students:

- Improve attendance
- Improve GPA
- Reduce disciplinary infractions
- Increase on-time promotion

Stakeholders to be involved in planning and implementation

- Students
- Teachers/Administrators
- Parents
- Community Partners
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Program Strategies

- Three-tier approach: 1)Spring 8th grade student and parent visits; 2)summer orientation targeted to students with disengagement factors; 3) year-round support via teacher, student and volunteer mentoring plus more intensive counseling for students who exhibit disengagement factors during first nine weeks.
- Tap high school assets to deliver strategies: AVID students, small learning community assets; teachers interested in expanding parent and student strategies PTA
- Teacher professional development to strengthen teacher – student climate
- Early student academic and socio-emotional assessment and plan
- Math and reading remediation
- Student leadership, team building and organizational skills
- Target guidance counselors to students with disengagement factors

Tactics

- Design spring visits, teacher training and “summer bridge camp” with all stakeholders’ input
- Estimate Budget:
 - Number of students
 - Teacher/administrator salaries
 - Supplies
 - Technical assistance and training
- Build timeline beginning March through summer teacher training
- Hire appropriate teaching & administrative staff for “summer bridge camp” and year-round academy
- Develop effective communication and registration processes (ie: creative outreach)
- Provide camp teachers training and technical assistance
- Provide summer bridge camp for in-coming 9th grade students:
 - Locker assignments
 - School tours
 - Distribution of schedules & student IDs
 - Assessment, orientation and enrollment in course offerings
 - Reading and Math classes
 - Seminars on Leadership, Team Building, Organizational Skills
 - Assignment of student or teacher mentors
- Provide three-tier approach to year-round support
 - Whole Academy prevention (i.e. school-wide attendance program keeps 70-80% of students on track)
 - Targeted interventions (additional focused supports for 10-20% of students)
 - Intensive interventions (small group or 1:1 support for 5-10% of students)