

136283

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this ~~copyrighted~~ material has been granted by

Public Domain/NSSC  
U.S. Department of Justice

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the ~~copyright~~ owner.

INCREASING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

NSSC RESOURCE PAPER

National School Safety Center  
Pepperdine University  
Malibu, CA 90265  
818/377-6200

Fourth Printing - May 1988

The National School Safety Center is a Partnership of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education and Pepperdine University.

Prepared under Grant #85-MU-CX-0003 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Ronald D. Stephens, Executive Director  
Stuart Greenbaum, Communications Director  
Ronald W. Garrison, Field Services Director

NCJRS

APR 24 1992

136283

## INCREASING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

America's youth are our nation's greatest asset. Sadly, each year a sizable portion of that resource is wasted because of truancy and dropouts.

Approximately 25 percent of the nation's high school students drop out before completing high school, and there are indications the percentage is growing. Dropout rates also vary widely from state to state. For example, a survey on Texas dropouts conducted by the Intercultural Development Research Association indicated the overall attrition rate for 1985-86 was 33 percent; for Hispanics, the rate was 45 percent. In New York City, half of entering high school students are likely to drop out. Poor, minority and other at-risk youths are three times more likely than other students to leave school before earning a diploma.

There is also growing evidence that children are dropping out at younger ages than ever before and are beginning to represent an unexpected cross-section of middle-class youngsters, some of whom had performed impressively in their class. In the Houston school district, for example, one-sixth of the known dropouts had left school between the sixth and eighth grades and were under 14 years old; 25 percent of these dropouts ranked in the top quarter of their classes in reading and mathematics scores.

Clearly, the nation's social and economic health suffers because of undereducated and uneducated youth. According to Esther Ferguson, founder and co-chairman of the non-profit National Dropout Prevention Fund, more than half of the nation's prisoners are dropouts. James S. Catterall, a researcher with the Stanford Education Policy Institute, estimates that dropouts cost the nation as much as \$228 billion a year in unemployment and welfare payments, lost tax revenues, additional law enforcement expenses, and other costs.

The issue has captured the attention of Congress and several state legislatures as they have tried to assess and address the problem. "Dropping out of school all but extinguishes the hope of making it in our competitive economy," stated Senator Claiborne Pell, the Rhode Island Democrat who chairs the Labor and Human Resources subcommittee on education. Pell's comments have been echoed by Senator Arlen Specter: "Job prospects for dropouts are worse than bleak. Dropouts who are fortunate find their way into dead-end jobs. The unfortunate ones find their way into prison."

Several congressmen have introduced bills that would earmark funds for statistical research and for demonstration projects designed to test new prevention strategies. One such bill, introduced by

Senator Pell, would require the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a year-long study of the dropout problem to answer some nagging statistical questions left by current reporting systems. Some state legislatures have also passed a variety of anti-truancy and anti-dropout bills. In February 1987, the Alaskan senate passed a bill that allows for a parent or guardian of a student who is repeatedly absent without an excuse to be jailed for 90 days or fined. A handful of parents in Maryland have already been fined, sentenced to probation, or required to perform community service hours for violating the state's compulsory public school attendance laws. Other states are considering similar legislation to tighten the reins on school attendance.

Still, there is no consensus on how specifically to define a dropout, how to measure the problem, and little concrete evidence about what really works to combat the problem. One of the most common methods for counting dropouts is to subtract 12th grade graduates from enrollment figures in the 9th or 10th grades of the same class. However, this method does not account for the number of students who may have dropped out before the 9th grade.

In spite of the problems in finding hard data on truancy and dropout rates, there is no doubt that school attendance is an important issue. Several indicators point to the seriousness of the problem. For example:

- \* For the last five years, school absenteeism (including truancy) has ranked either first or among the top concerns of the National Association of Secondary School Principals as reflected in their annual membership poll.
- \* A national survey by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research showed that of the high school seniors surveyed, 13.4 percent said that within a four-week period they were truant from classes at least one day for reasons other than illness.
- \* In a 1986 Gallup Poll, public respondents identified "pupil lack of interest/truancy" as one of the most serious problems facing schools and the community.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have compulsory school attendance/education laws. But it is often difficult to enforce these laws when both school and the law enforcement officials find themselves faced with many other high priority problems. However, educational and juvenile justice practitioners have discussed the apparent links between school truancy and delinquency in the community.

Experts in dropout prevention observed that when students are truant from school, many become involved in delinquent activities. Several short-term studies in various communities throughout the nation indicate a link between truancy and daytime delinquency, particularly residential burglary, and suggest that eliminating truancy may be an answer to decreasing community crime.

Whether the problem is excessive absence or dropping out altogether, non-attendance creates long-range complications for the students, schools, and communities.

Compared to the general public, dropouts are more likely to face unemployment, menial jobs and reliance on public assistance. Consider the following:

- \* The unemployment rate for dropouts was 23.7 percent compared with 13.8 percent for high school graduates, according to a 1978 report from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- \* An American male with less than 12 years of school can expect to earn \$601,000 in a lifetime of steady work. But if that same male graduates from high school, his earnings increase to \$861,000, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

While many of those who drop out end up in similar situations experiencing reduced employment and professional opportunities, the circumstances that lead them there may not all be the same.

A 1982 study for California's State Board of Education by the Open Road/Citizens Policy Center found twice as many boys as girls leave school before graduation and of the girls leaving, two-thirds cite pregnancy as the main reason.

Nationally, 80 percent of pregnant and married female teens drop out, according to the study. Almost a million adolescent girls -- one in ten -- get pregnant every year in this country. American teen-agers are more likely to get pregnant than teens in most other industrialized nations.

Of the dropouts interviewed, more than half cited school-related reasons, while 42 percent said they had family problems. Others said drug or alcohol problems or financial need were the reasons for leaving school.

There is a definite need for hard data and consistent definitions of truancy and dropouts so the problems can be better assessed. Although some states, such as Illinois and California, have

included exact definitions of truancy in their education codes, there is no consistency in defining the problems nationally. Pending legislation at the federal level calls for establishing a standard definition of a school dropout.

Existing conditions must be defined before effective improvement strategies can be developed.

It is essential that action be taken as soon as potential or actual problems are perceived because the consequences affect the community as well individuals.

### STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE

While there is a tie between truancy and dropout problems, each issue must be addressed differently. Therefore, the strategies for dealing with these are discussed separately.

#### Truancy Prevention Strategies

The first step toward improving attendance is simply preventing students from staying out of school without a valid reason. Although truants aren't in class, they're often somewhere on or about school grounds causing disruptions. Those who leave campus are most likely loitering somewhere in the community. Efforts to prevent truancy are, therefore, the collaborative responsibility of educators, law enforcers, parents and community members.

Following is a series of strategies which have worked in schools across the nation.

#### 1. Community truancy prevention committee

The goals and activities of the committee should be mutually determined by representatives from the school, law enforcement, parents and the community. Prior to the initial meeting, which should occur at the beginning of the school year, a letter should be sent to all parents and residents in the immediate community to explain the following: collaborative nature of the committee; committee goals and possible activities; full text of the state's compulsory education law; legal explanation of parental responsibility for a child's school attendance; school policies regarding truant offenses; the connection between truancy, dropouts and crime; the economic consequences of truancy and dropouts; and an invitation to become involved in a collaborative way to help solve the problem.

#### 2. Clear truancy policies

Student codes of conduct should state the legal requirements for school attendance, as well as the school's expectations and clear definitions of what comprises truancy. The policy must also state the school and court consequences of being truant.

3. Parent and community meetings or newsletters  
Communication with parents and residents in the immediate community about truancy is essential. If no truancy prevention committee is present in the community, general meetings should be arranged at the beginning of the school year and quarterly newsletters should be mailed that include updated information about both the continuing problem and improvement. Such communication must include an explanation of the student code of conduct, state compulsory education laws and legal consequences for the truant student, as well as the truancy-dropout connection and related economic consequences.
4. Law enforcement school visitations  
Law enforcers can give guest lectures to classes or plan assemblies to explain the law enforcement and legal response to truancy. If a particular law enforcement program is in effect, the program and its consequences should be carefully explained.

### Truancy Intervention Strategies

Identifying the existence of a potential or actual truancy problems requires school intervention. This strategy is especially important as it is designed to diagnose the problem and then find ways to divert the student from serious truant behavior.

1. Teacher involvement and notification of absence  
Teachers must be involved in the attendance process through three basic actions: keeping regular and active attendance records; communicating to students the importance of daily class attendance; and promptly reporting all absences to the office. Further, if a teacher suspects a student is truant or cutting class, he or she should personally work with the student upon return to class, assign some correctional activity (detention or whatever is used in the school), and communicate with the parents.
2. Immediate follow-up for absence  
Phone calls before noon to the homes of all absentees on day of non-attendance brings several positive consequences: a message to the parents and student that the school not only cares, but will not tolerate truancy; a message to other students that if you are truant from school, you will be caught; and sometimes it brings about the immediate return of the truant to school.
3. Parental meetings  
When truant behavior is suspected or actually discovered parents should be asked to come to school for a meeting. Parental involvement must be stressed for a collaborative resolution.

4. Academic credits

Many schools face a moral dilemma about whether attendance should be a factor in granting academic credits. For those schools that deny credit to truants, the reasons and consequences must be made clear to the student and parents after the first offense. Schools that allow credit to be made up must provide formal mechanism for work to be completed immediately after the first truancy to prevent too much make-up work.

5. Public awareness campaign

Schools with a truancy problem should sponsor public awareness campaigns to identify the problem as more than a school concern. By publicizing local daytime juvenile crime rates, especially residential burglary, loss of school income due to truancy and other relevant statistics, community members become aware of the problem. Such publicity should be followed by a positive media campaign. Announcements, posters and meetings could emphasize a slogan such as "Love Your Children - Keep Them in School!"

6. School counselor liaisons

When a school begins experiencing truancy problems, it may be time to free counselors from traditional desk-bound assignments for active community liaison functions. Counselors can work within the community to build parent awareness of the problem and to network with law enforcers who often deal with truant students.

7. High risk student counseling or transfer

Students identified as truants or "high risks" for truant behavior (i.e., they demonstrate patterns of excessive tardies or cutting) should be enrolled in career education or guidance courses that may deter them from actual truant behavior. If their classes are not meeting their expectations or if problematic patterns appear, transfer to another class may be necessary. In some cases, transfer to another school within the district may be helpful.

8. Statewide attendance legislation

Statewide laws that require a certain number of days of school attendance and allowing a maximum number of excused and unexcused absences to pass can be an effective truancy intervention strategy. (South Carolina's Education Improvement Act of 1984 requires 170 days of attendance with a maximum of 10 absences; since its passage, many local schools have noticed an increase in student attendance.)

Truancy Response Strategies

Once the truancy problem in a school shifts from a potential or minor problem into an actual or chronic problem, school personnel must be prepared to respond with a variety of options.

1. In-school suspension

Chronic truants may be assigned to isolated classes where the students are closely supervised rather than sent home. During in-school suspension, students work on classroom assignments, but they may not socialize with other students on campus. All lunch and other breaks are scheduled when other students are in class. These programs report success for several reasons: parents who work are assured suspended students receive appropriate education and supervision; because the student is actually in school, no financial loss is suffered by the school; and students are less likely to fall behind in their studies and can be more easily reintegrated into class.

2. Saturday school program

Saturday school is a structured, supervised, minimum-day program that usually includes tutorial assistance in completing classroom assignments students missed because of excessive trancies, tardies or class cuts. Students are assigned to this program in lieu of suspension. Saturday school infringes on the student's free time and, therefore, usually modifies the behavior that led to the student's being assigned to the program. In addition, the program emphasizes the student's responsibility to arrive on time and to complete classwork.

3. "Operation Stay-in-School"

Operation Stay-in-School, begun in Fresno, California, and now used statewide, is a truancy-reduction program operated under the collaborative sponsorship of a school district and a local law enforcement agency. Its main objective is to enforce compulsory school attendance laws. On stipulated days and hours, law enforcement officers locate unsupervised school-aged students without valid reasons for being out of school during school hours. When truant students are apprehended by law enforcement officers, the student is taken to a reception center. (The California Education Code Section 58625 allows apprehended students to be taken to a reception center operated by the school district.) At the center, personnel contact the school and a parent, who is requested to come to the center and return the student to school. The center provides the opportunity for parents to meet with school personnel to discuss the situation and to talk with their youngsters. In some areas where a reception center is not available, students are returned to their school, and their parents are contacted to set up a conference before the students can be readmitted to the regular school program.

4. Truancy court referral procedures

A collaborative agreement can be arranged between school and court authorities about how to deal with habitual truants and their parents.



5. Student Attendance Review Boards (SARBs)  
SARB committees are comprised of school, law enforcement and county officials who meet to discuss how serious student attendance problems may be resolved. SARBs hold meetings with students and parents, asking for relevant input from school officials. After such meetings, a contract is often signed which indicates exactly what is expected of the student.
6. Juvenile court rulings  
In some areas where chronic truancy is a problem, juvenile court judges may exercise their judicial authority to cite parents and their child for contempt of court if the child refuses to attend school. These legal issues are yet to be clearly resolved by the courts.
7. Fines assessment  
Districts experiencing heavy financial losses due to chronic truancy can adopt a district policy to levy a series of truancy fines for the offense as well as court costs. Districts interested in such a program should also hire a school/home liaison who can follow each case through the appropriate legal channels and make certain severe cases are actually prosecuted in court.
8. Tighter enforcement of truancy laws  
Educators and local law enforcers facing a serious truancy problem can agree to tighten the enforcement of existing truancy laws. Such agreements must be well publicized to the students, parents and community members.

#### Truancy Reduction Model Programs

The National School Safety Center has identified the following programs to reduce both truant behavior and daytime juvenile crime.

##### Attendance Awareness Campaign

Pocomoke High School  
R.F.D. 2, Box 195  
Pocomoke City, Maryland 21851-9538  
301/957-1484

Contact: James H. VanSciver, Principal

The program was developed around staff support, a minimal time commitment, inexpensive tangible rewards and positive, rather than punitive, school action. Since absences increased during the junior and senior years, the program targeted sophomores in an effort to establish positive attendance patterns.

As the fall term began, parents of sophomore students received a letter outlining the program, which was described to the tenth

graders at a school assembly. During the first and second grading periods, a series of positive statements emphasizing the importance of perfect attendance was read in every sophomore's first period class. A T-shirt was awarded to every student in the tenth grade homeroom with the best attendance record during the project. This encouraged peer pressure promoting good attendance. Students with perfect attendance were recognized in the local media, received certificates and a personal congratulatory letter from the principal. Names of students with perfect monthly attendance were posted on a school bulletin board. The principal also called the home of each tenth grade student who had perfect attendance during the first half of each of the first two grading periods.

Comparisons showed attendance improved over the previous year. In 1983-1984 tenth grade students were absent an average of seven school days during the first two grading periods, but this fell to 3.45 days for the 1984-1985 sophomores. While the sophomore's average daily attendance rate increased over the previous year, it fell for the other three grades.

#### Rohnert Park Stop and Cite Program

Rohnert Park Department of Public Safety  
5200 Country Club Drive  
Rohnert Park, California 94928  
(707) 585-1122

Contact: Jim Park, Director  
Youth Services Bureau

Begun in 1978, the Stop and Cite Program was designed to reduce truancy and juvenile crime in the community and to increase average daily attendance funds for the schools. During the program's first year in operation, daylight burglaries in Rohnert Park decreased 48%; during the second year, an additional 16% decrease was noted. Over the same 2-year period, vandalism decreased 35%, thefts decreased 12%, and the savings to the community due to such improvement amounted to \$262,000.

This program stresses "positive" contact between police and students. Patrolmen issue courtesy citations to suspected truants contacted during school hours. Two citations are issued without penalty, and students are returned to school to meet with parent and vice-principal. The third citation results in referral to appropriate support services.

#### Project HOPE (Helping Others Pursue Education)

Inglewood Unified School District  
401 S. Inglewood Avenue  
Inglewood, California 90301  
(213) 419-2900

Begun during the 1983-84 school year, Project HOPE was designed to be a counseling program to reduce truancy and improve community climate. After its initial year of operation, school officials reported a general increase in school attendance over the previous year. Additionally, the Inglewood Police Department found that in one month (May 1984), areas served by Project HOPE indicated 40% less incidence of daytime burglaries than in other Inglewood neighborhoods not served by the Project.

Students picked up off the streets, suspended from school or awaiting expulsion attend the off-campus counseling and instruction center. A credentialed coordinator, counselor, teacher, teacher aide and a district security guard closely supervise the students.

Students with chronic discipline problems other than truancy are referred to law enforcement agencies where appropriate. Students remaining at Project HOPE are counseled on an individual or group basis. The Center offers basic skill instruction and expects suspended students to complete homework.

#### School-Based Delinquency Prevention-Diversion Program

Peer Group Counseling  
Berrien County Juvenile Court  
Division of Court Services  
County Courthouse  
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

The program, which involved local school personnel, a citizen advisory council and the local Youth Services Bureau, established a delinquency prevention and treatment program for area high school and junior high school students. Results from the program, which was held from October 1977 through September 30, 1977, indicated a 31.7% reduction in truancy and a 64.5% reduction in community delinquency.

The Peer Counseling Program involved groups of 12 to 15 students who met to openly communicate and create a positive atmosphere for attitude change. During the 1976-77 school year, 236 students were involved in 14 full-time groups; another 300 participated on part-time basis. Teachers, school administrators, group leaders or students identified those in need of the program. Group facilitators included school and juvenile court personnel.

#### Dropout Prevention Strategies

Because the dropout problem affects home and community life, resolution necessarily involves parents, community members, law enforcers, juvenile justice personnel and youth serving professionals.

These groups, along with educators, need to form a support network to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Since attendance behavior is learned, early efforts should be used to deter the development of student absentee patterns. Initial efforts should be directed at students, parents and school staff. The following strategies are recommended:

1. Clear attendance policies

State regulations and district attendance policy and procedures must be clearly explained and widely disseminated to students, parents and staff. A clear description of the truancy policy should be included in the student conduct code to be distributed to students and parents.

2. School staff training

School personnel, especially classroom teachers, need training which explains the importance and legal ramifications of enforcing attendance policy and procedures. Training may include methods for identifying and assisting high-risk students, techniques for efficient record-keeping, facts about the financial impact on the school of non-attendance, and daytime juvenile crime, especially residential burglary.

3. Parent support

Parent support is essential, and meetings, bulletins and other communications with parents should communicate clearly the importance of regular attendance. Parents must be notified and their aid requested when absentee patterns begin.

4. Academic aid

Students whose classwork has suffered because of attendance problems may need opportunities for independent study or tutorial instruction.

5. Attendance record reviews

An annual attendance record review helps schools identify students with poor attendance patterns in previous years. Reviews made before school opens allow staff to schedule interviews with these students at the beginning of the academic year. Interviewers can discuss reasons for absences, apprehensions about school, the relationship between attendance and academic success, consequences of not graduating and ways to improve attendance. Weekly or monthly reviews of students with attendance problems indicate if additional intervention is needed.

6. Build self-esteem

Dropout prevention programs must address the special needs of students most likely to leave school before graduation. In primary grades the goal is a safe, no-risk classroom environment. Curriculum includes activities which build self-esteem, develop problem-solving skills and encourage regular attendance. Secondary school programs should reinforce and extend these primary school efforts. Junior and senior high counselors must help instructors identify and monitor potential dropouts and enlist the support and involvement of their parents.

## Dropout Intervention Strategies

When attendance, truancy or dropout problems appear, schools must initiate efforts to interrupt and change unacceptable patterns.

### 1. Counseling

Individual or group counseling is needed for students with erratic attendance. Parents should be notified and offered support as well. Students and parents must be informed of laws mandating attendance.

### 2. "Adopt-A-Student"

Adopt-A-Student or peer programs may encourage better attendance. Teachers, student or community volunteers work with individual students to develop and promote attendance goals.

### 3. Alternative classes

A special curriculum or program changes may be needed to improve attendance. Independent study, tutorial, half-day, homebound or self-contained classes are options. In an extreme situation transfer to another school setting may be necessary to remove a student from peer situations contributing to absenteeism. Pregnant students often require alternative education programs which include secondary education instruction, job training and support services, such as counseling, child care, health services and G.E.D. preparation.

### 4. Public programs

Public awareness campaigns can help reduce truancy and dropout rates. New instruction units can involve students in developing and enforcing attendance rules. A speakers' panel, composed of successful or well-known adults who themselves overcame attendance or dropout problems, can be formed to address student and community audiences on the social and economic consequences of such behavior.

### 5. Special interagency teams

Students with high potential for dropping out can be referred to an interagency team (or I-Team), which includes school, law enforcement and community members. The team develops programs for individual students, encourages parent involvement, identifies any medical problems and refers students to appropriate school and community agencies. When possible, the team also works to improve the student's home environment.

## Dropout Response Strategies

When attendance becomes a chronic problem or students drop out, school personnel need to respond quickly and differently.

### 1. Student interviews

Interviews by a counselor can determine if excessive absences are related to psychological disorders, learning disabilities or family problems. These discussions can encourage school

attendance and establish a plan for the absentee, truant or dropout to return to the academic environment. A buddy system, pairing the returnee with a student who successfully re-entered, is an effective policy. Counselor monitored programs offering rewards or attendance contracts promote attendance.

2. Workshops for students

Responding to the needs of students who have legally quit school, educators can sponsor return-to-school workshops. Invited school dropouts learn about increased employment and other benefits for graduates. Counselors describe ways the school will assist in the return to school.

3. Workshops for parents

Workshops for parents of dropouts provide positive reinforcement to those supporting readmission. Parents learn about the adjustments students face when returning. Parents and re-enrolling students should be personally recruited and, when possible, transported to the workshop by a school employee.

4. Alternative schools

Alternative education opportunities should be provided for students who are unwilling or unable to resume a traditional academic program. Vocational or skill centers, sometimes known as "second chance" schools, teach returning students a trade as well as basic educational skills. Students graduating from centers must demonstrate minimum academic skills.

5. Continuation schools

Continuation schools offer another alternative educational environment for high school dropouts. Students usually have individualized instruction and learn at their own pace. While the learning environment is different than the traditional school, students study the same basic courses, receive the same credits and must pass identical minimum academic skill tests to graduate.

6. Teen mother programs

If they didn't drop out during their pregnancy, teen mothers are likely to drop out after the baby is born because of child care problems, exhaustion, lack of support and financial need. Education is essential for teen-age mothers who now also are responsible for the future and well-being of a baby as well as themselves. One approach to keep young mothers in school and help them as much as possible is a comprehensive program that offers child care, parenting skills, job training and varied opportunities for the mother to complete her education. Child care facilities on or near the high school campus provide the student parents an opportunity to spend time with their children during the school day. The child care component of the program also provides an opportunity for community members to get involved and help in the efforts to prevent dropouts.

## Dropout Prevention Model Programs

Educators throughout the nation have developed many successful school programs. Usually what works at one school can be adapted to meet similar problems at another campus.

Brief descriptions of the programs follow.

### New Futures School

2120 Louisiana Boulevard, NE  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110  
505/883-5680

Contact: Caroline Gaston, Director

Since 1970 New Futures School, an alternative school of the Albuquerque Public School System, has offered programs to help keep pregnant and parenting teens in school. Employment training, counseling, child care and health services, secondary education and GED preparation have been offered. Support has come from the public school district, a Community Development Block Grant, the Jobs Training Partnership Act, a Social Services Block Grant and private foundations. During the 1984-85 school year, of the 450 youths served, approximately 50 teen parents had subsidized employment. The employment training component was not funded for 1985-86, but New Futures is seeking support to reinstate this component in 1986-87.

Satisfactory school progress and daily participation in job training class has been required for participation in the student employment program, which awarded school credit for work experience. The center recruited community employers and offered vocational awareness programs, funded by a grant from the Levi Strauss Foundation.

### Comprehensive Dropout Prevention Program

Richmond Public Schools  
301 North Ninth Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
804/780-5459

Contact: Ralph Dickens, Project Administrator

Richmond Public Schools recognized the high correlation between students who are habitually truant and who drop out of school. It was also concerned with the lowered academic performance and increased daytime criminal involvement of truant youths. The Richmond Dropout Prevention Program was established to return out-of-school youth to school, to enforce the compulsory school attendance law and to reduce the dropout rate significantly.

Three "T" (truancy) centers are maintained in the city's main geographic regions. Truants or suspected truants are taken to the nearest "T" center, usually by city police officers. Parents are notified, a warning is issued and the student is returned to school. "T" center staff monitor the student's attendance following the first offense, and if the problem persists, the student is referred to the court.

#### Alternative and Continuing Education

Fullerton Union High School District  
780 Beechwood Avenue  
Fullerton, California 92635  
714/879-5930

Contact: Jean Klinghoffer, Coordinator

The program also helps potential dropouts who have a need to learn English and/or improve basic literacy skills.

Students in grades 9 through 12 are served by a variety of programs that retain potential dropouts and help other students who would otherwise have problems graduating from high school.

Students who are employed can complete their high school diploma through independent study contracts. Students who are 16-18 years old who are unable to adjust to the comprehensive high school setting may enroll in the Continuation High School. For 14-16-year-old youths, opportunity classes are available to prevent high risk youth from dropping out of school. These classes are usually small to provide a lot of individualized attention and guidance.

Classes are strategically located throughout the communities served by the district, and class schedules run from early morning to late evening to accommodate special needs such as those of employed students, pregnant minors and teen-age mothers.

Close cooperation with ROP and JTPA strengthens program offerings and student opportunities to combine classroom work with valuable vocational training.

#### Cities In Schools, Inc.

1110 Vermont Avenue N.W. Suite 1120  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202/861-0230

Contact: Andrea McAleenan

During the 1960's and early 1970's, staff who would later form Cities In Schools, Inc. (CIS), were working inner-city areas to develop what were called "Street Academies" for high school dropouts. The purpose of the street academy program was to offer an



alternative to those young people, drawn especially from the poor and disadvantaged, who had dropped out of school before graduation, and appeared caught in the dead-end unemployment/crime/welfare cycle.

Although the street academies were initially funded almost exclusively from private sources (primarily large corporations), the program now receives support from public sources.

The various CIS model programs throughout the country coordinate both educational and social services to youth through working partnerships between public and private sector leadership.

Since its inception, the CIS program has consistently demonstrated its ability to keep potential dropouts in school, bring current dropouts back to school, improve attendance and increase academic achievement.

For example, during the 1982-1983 school year:

- \* In Houston, students referred to CIS as juvenile offender or truancy cases improved their attendance from a pre-CIS rate of 57 percent up to 88 percent.
- \* In Atlanta, where more than half the CIS students had been dropouts prior to enrolling in CIS, students attendance rate went up to 82 percent.
- \* In New York, CIS students gained an average of 1.3 years in reading achievement. This more than doubled their previous gains in reading in the year prior to CIS.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

Educators, community members, parents and law enforcers have many available resources from which to choose when tackling an attendance problem. The following examples, while not comprehensive, provide a representative sampling of school attendance resources which may be helpful.

Children Out of School in America. Children's Defense Fund of the Washington Research Project, Inc., October 1974.

Coleman, James S.; Hoffer, Thomas; and Kilgore, Sally. High School Achievement. New York: Basic Books, 1982.

Community/School Comprehensive Dropout Prevention Program. Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Public Schools (printed 1980-81, revised 1983-84).

Dropping Out, Losing Out: The High Cost for California. A report prepared by the California Assembly Office of Research, September 1985.

Fresno Interagency Task Force. Report of the Fresno Interagency Task Force on School Dropouts. Fresno, California: Fresno Interagency Committee, March 1984.

Levin, Henry M, The Effects of Dropping Out. A report to the Select Committee on Educational Opportunity of the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1972.

Nyangoni, Betty W., "Truancy and the Absent-Minded Student," School Safety, NSSC Newsjournal, Spring 1985.

Open Road Issues Research Project Citizens Policy Center. Push Out, Step Out - A Report on California's Public School Drop-Outs. 1982.

Plisko, Valena White. The Condition of Education. National Center for Education Statistics, 1984 edition.

Rumberger, Russell W. Dropping Out of High School: The Influence of Race, Sex and Family Background. American Educational Research Journal, Summer 1983, Vol. 20, No. 2.

Thornton, William E. Jr.; James, Jennifer; and Doerner, William G. Delinquency and Justice. Random House, New York, 1984.

## Organizations and Contacts

International Association of Pupil Personnel Workers  
c/o William Meyer  
Mt. View, Post Office Box 36  
Barnesville, Maryland 20838