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National Center for School Engagement

Truancy Matters: Research, Policies and Practices

**CASCWA National Truancy Conference
October 13, 2006**

National Center for School Engagement (NCSE)

- An initiative of the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children
- Launched in September 2003
- Promotes school success



Mission

*To ensure
school success for
at-risk youth and their
families by improving
school engagement.*



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Strategies

- Identify and promote best practices that are evidence and research-based
- Collaborate with schools, families/communities, private/public agencies, courts and law enforcement



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Strategies

- Utilize approaches that are culturally competent, family-centered, and strengths-based
- Implement methods to integrate the 3 A's *of School Engagement*

ATTENDANCE
ATTACHMENT
ACHIEVEMENT



3 A's of School Engagement

- **Attendance**—Schools, families, courts, and law enforcement use culturally-responsive, evidence-based strategies to improve student attendance.
- Includes reducing truancy, addressing barriers to attendance, and high mobility.

ATTENDANCE



3 A's of School Engagement

- **Attachment**—Schools establish **meaningful connections** with youth and their families through caring, support, and mutually-defined expectations.
- Includes after school programs, prevention and family support programs, parent/school collaborations, **welcoming school environments...**



3 A's of School Engagement

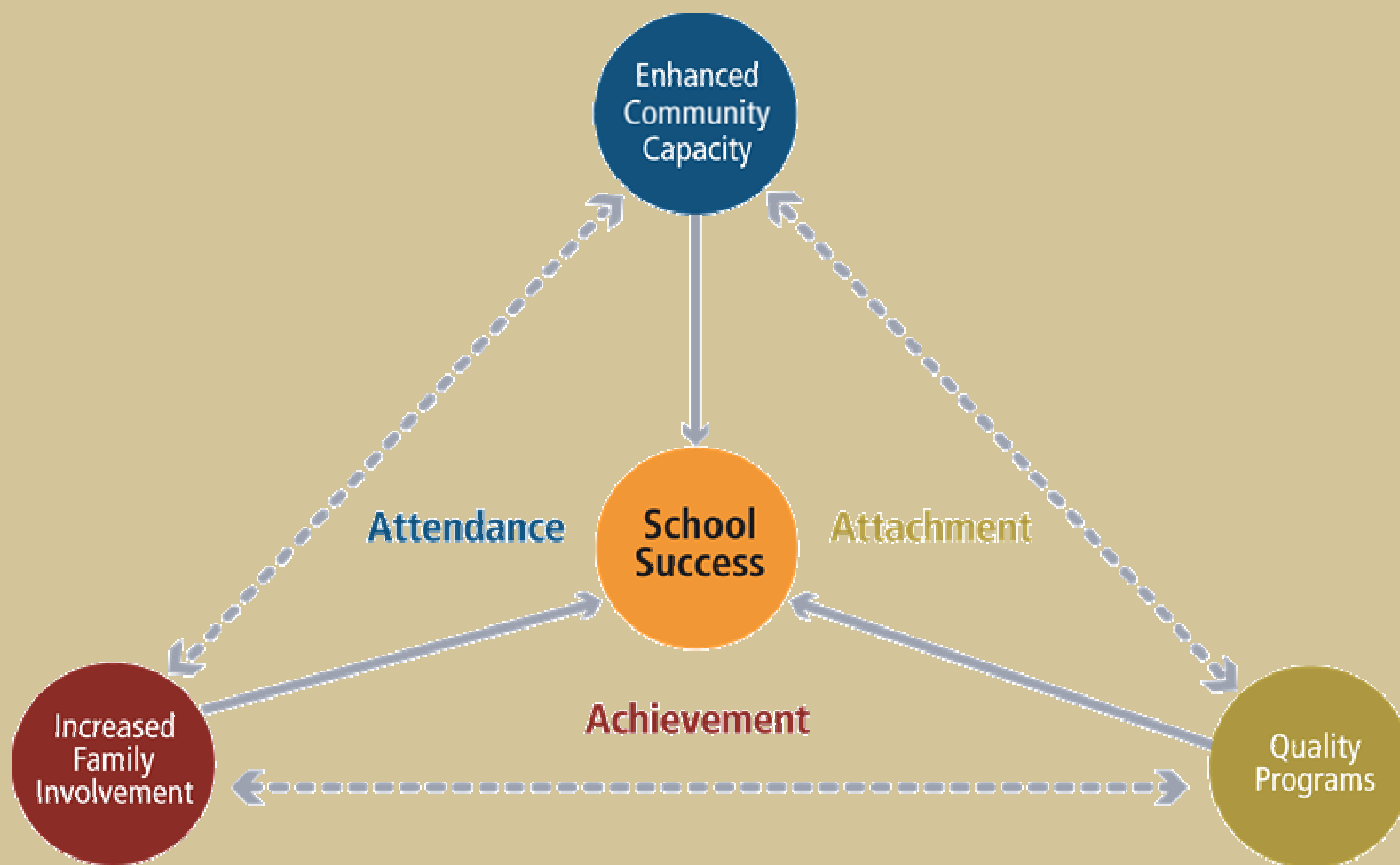
- **Achievement**—Communities, schools, and families assure that students **have the tools and resources** to complete courses and graduate from high school.
- Involves **planning for success**, closing the achievement gap...
- Educators seek to **improve educational practices** to promote school success for all children.



Theory of Change

- School success is based on integration of **attachment, attendance, and achievement.**
- NCSE uses this *Theory of Change* to develop and implement strategies that **ensure school success and school completion.**





What the Research Says



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Dropout/Graduation Statistics

- Use dropout statistics as a proxy for truancy
- Raging national debate on graduation/dropout rates
- Many limitations of data
- Varying definitions (event, status, promotion indices, etc.)



Dropout/Graduation Statistics

- Varying sources of data (U.S Census Bureau, Common Core of Data, longitudinal studies)
- Result in a range of national rates
 - 87% (NCES) class of 2001
 - 69% (Swanson, 2004) class of 2001
 - 72% (Greene, 2006) class of 2003



Graduation Rate

Geographic Area	2002-2003	2003-2004
California	74.1	73.9
Colorado	76.4	78
U.S.	73.9	75
Source: www.nces.ed.gov . <i>Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate for Public High Schools From the Common Core of Data</i>		



NCES Common Core of Data

- School district and state level data
- Trend data (you can build your own table)
- Data available
 - 12th grade dropout rate
 - 12th graders received a diploma
 - 9th graders received a diploma



Dropout Statistics

- **5%** of teenagers/young adults enrolled in High School **left without successfully completing a high school program** - 2001
- In 2001, 3.8 million young adults (about **11%** of those age 16-24) **were not in high school and had not completed high school or received a GED**
- Youth in the **lowest income families at greatest risk of dropout**



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Source: Census data (Current Population Survey)

Truancy Statistics

- Currently no national definition
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires state definition of truancy
- NCLB requires states collect truancy rates (not only attendance rates)



No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Title IV, Part A: Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act

- Uniform Management Information
Reporting System (UMIRS)



Uniform Management Information Reporting System

Intent:

- Standardize reporting of data across the districts within a state
- Requires (among other things):
Collection of school- and district-level student behavior-related data and public reporting



Truancy Data Sources

- Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS)/CDC
- Health Behavior in School Age Children (WHO/SAMHSA)
- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY/BLS)
- National Juvenile Court Data Archive (OJJDP)



Some Truancy Statistics

- Around **7%** of students report they **did not go to school on one or more of the past 30 days** because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to/from school. (YRBS)
- Rate of 9-12 graders that report **missing school due to safety concerns** has grown **50%** since **1993** (YRBS)
- A longitudinal study of youth ages 12-16 found that **38%** reported being late to school without an excuse (NLSY).

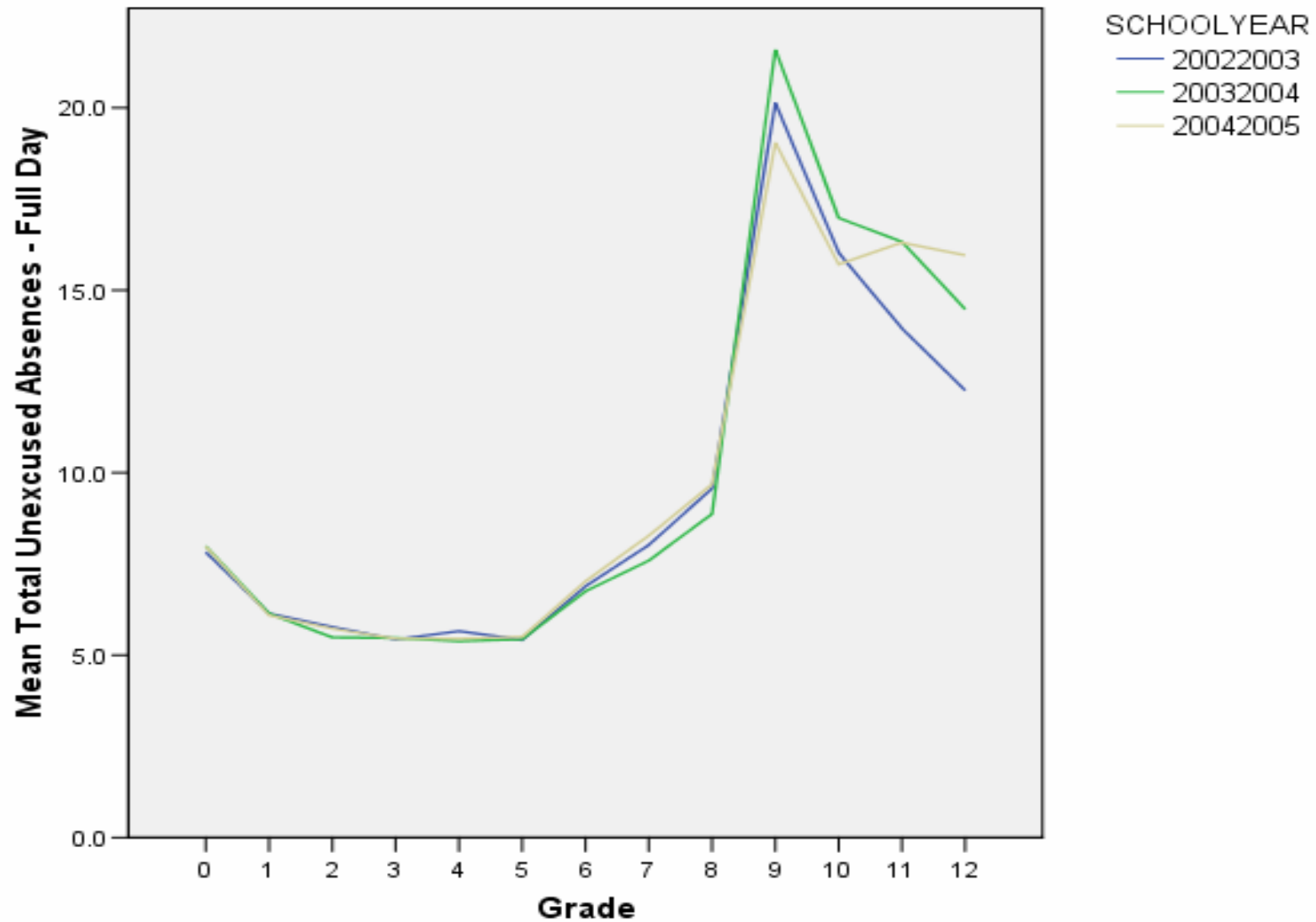


The Denver Data

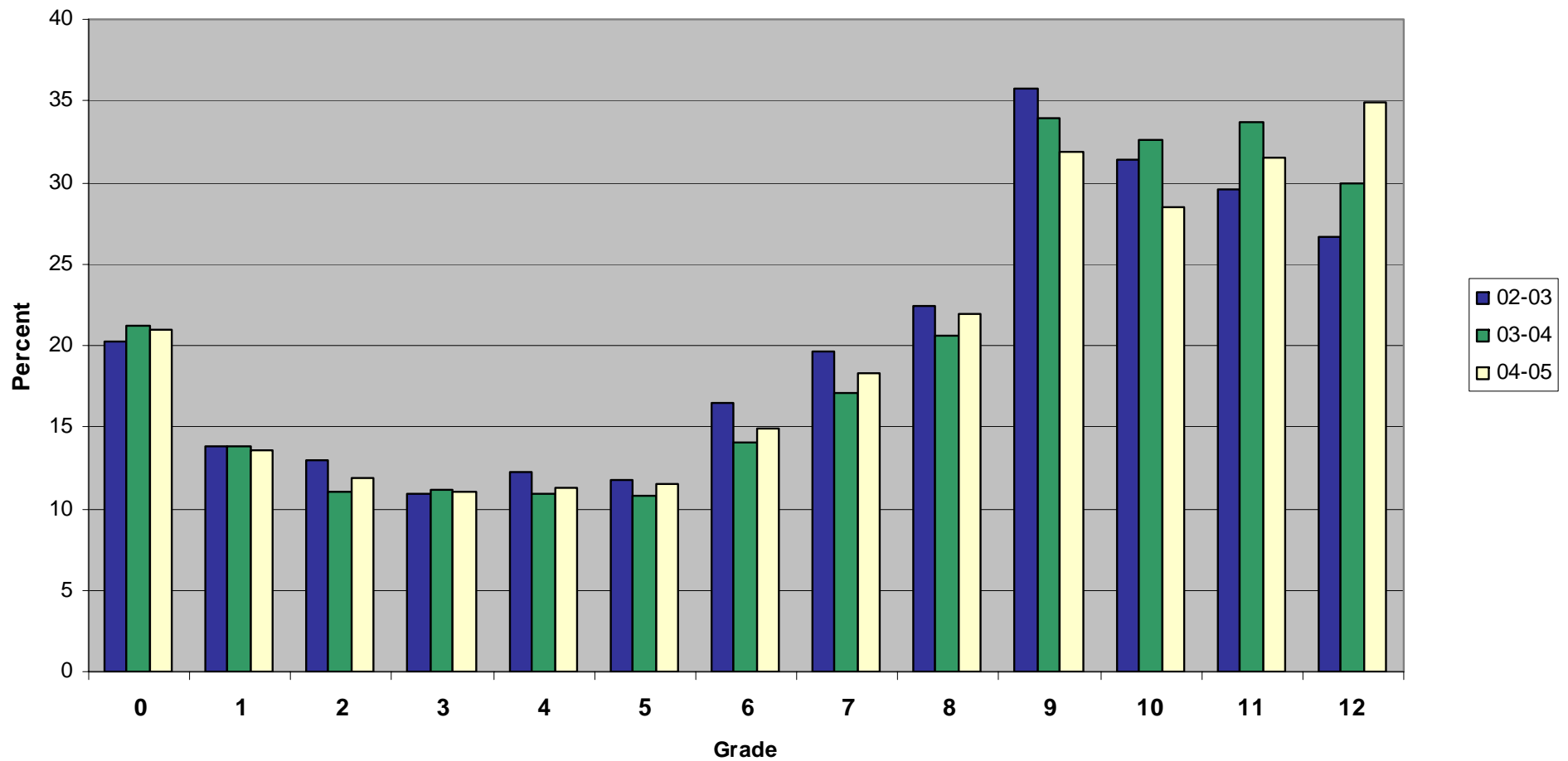
- Collected data from Denver Public Schools to assess prevalence of truancy
- Work sponsored by National Truancy Prevention Association
- Assessment gives a better indication than attendance rates or drop out statistics



DPS Average Unexcused Absences by Grade



Percent of DPS Chronic Truants by Grade



Percent of Chronic Truants and Their Exit Status

- Approximately **60 %** of students who left DPS for **juvenile incarceration or detention** were **chronically truant**.
- Approximately **60%** of students who were **expelled from DPS** were **chronically truant**.
- Approximately **16 %** of students who attended **more than one school in a school year** are **chronically truant**.



Percent of Chronic Truants Who Drop Out

- Approximately **20%** of students who left to be home schooled were chronically truant.
- Approximately **13%** of student whose exit code was “mutual consent (under the age 16)”, “runaway or other causes”, or “no trace of enrollment in another school” were chronically truant.
- Approximately **50 %** of students whose exit code was “**dropout**” were chronically truant.



Truancy Matters: A Close-up Look at Impacts



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Linking Absence to Delinquency



Poor Outcomes:

- ✓ Lower Lifetime Earnings
- ✓ Adult Criminality
- ✓ Poor Outcomes for Offspring
- ✓ Family Dysfunction
- ✓ Unemployment



Effect of Truancy on Later Delinquency

Onset of Serious Assault Crimes

Class Skipper	4.12 times as likely
Minor Truant (1-3 days)	4.03
Moderate Truant (4-9 days)	6.84
Chronic Truant (> 9 days)	12.15

Source: Henry and Huizinga, 2005



Truancy and Drug Use

Onset of Marijuana Use

- Class Skipper 4.11 times as likely
- Minor Truant (1-3 days) 7.17
- Moderate Truant (4-9 days) 12.37
- Chronic Truant (> 9 days) 16.08



What Happens to Truant Youth?

- Educational failure/ Poor achievement
- Poor Employability, work stability
- Delinquency and adult criminality
- Unstable personal relationships
- Poverty
- Dependence on public assistance



What Happens to Their Families?

- Unsupervised children get into trouble
- Parents are called away from work to the school or truancy court
- Family conflict due to school absences and lack of academic achievement



Impact of Truancy

There are Systemic Effects

- School disruption
- School test scores suffer
- Operating revenue decreases
- Juvenile courts flooded
- Daytime crime escalates
- Later criminal behavior



Factors Impacting Truancy

Risk Factors

- Fear of harm in schools or neighborhood victimization
- Abuse in the home
- Low academic achievement
- Substance abuse
- Lack of parental involvement in school or homework
- Chronic health problems

Protective Factors

- Self esteem
- Positive school attitudes
- School attachment
- Activities such as sports, clubs and volunteer work,
- Sense of purpose in life
- Positive attitudes toward police officers



Family Influences

- Parents unaware of problem
- Domestic violence/abuse, neglect
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Substance Abuse
- Lack of awareness of the law
- Education not valued



Typical Characteristics for Families of Chronic Truants

- Poverty
- Working students
- Single parent homes
- High mobility rates
- Parents holding multiple jobs
- Families not engaged with school



What are the costs of truancy?

- Short term costs
 - School and court expenditures
 - Cost of sentencing options (detention)
 - Juvenile crime associated with truancy
- Long term costs
 - Adult crime later on
 - Lower income tax revenues
 - Increased social service expenditures



Court: Results of Colorado Study

	Adams	Denver	Pueblo
Number of truancy filings '00-'01	217	980	79
Total court cost	\$90 K	\$286 K	\$55 K
Per truant cost	\$413	\$292	\$694
Potential savings (30% success)	\$ 13.5 million	\$63 million	\$5 million
Breakeven success rate	1/504	1/739	1/302
Or one grad every...	2.3 years	.75 years	3.8 years



TRP: Results

	Adams	Denver	Pueblo
Number of youths served '00-'01	90	84	423
Total program cost	\$49 K	\$54 K	\$768 K
Per truant cost	\$544	\$640	\$1,815
Potential savings	\$7.8 million	\$7.5 million	\$38.8 million
Breakeven success rate	1/383	1/337	1/115
Or one grad every...	4.2 years	4 years	3 months



Truancy Reduction Saves Public Funds

Estimated Per Capita Savings in Public
Spending and Income Taxes For Each Truant
Student Who Completes High School

Adams County, CO - \$208,371

Denver, CO - \$215,649

Pueblo, CO - \$209,550



Policy Matters: Issues and Leverages for Changes



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Definition for “Habitually Truant”

What is your state law?

Questions to consider:

In your state, is this law achieving what it intended to achieve?

Is it being used to recapture kids or punish them?

Are districts consistently following it?

Has research been done on its implementation?



Levers for Policy Change

- Federal *No Child Left Behind* Law
- Attendance = School Funding
- High Stakes Achievement Testing
- Truancy Reduction ↓ Day time crime
- Truancy Reduction ↓ Court Costs



Community Contributions

- Set community standards that value going to school (involve retired persons)
- Work with businesses to promote school attendance
- Improve transportation access
- Increase awareness of the problem and the solutions
- Connect schools with law enforcement and youth services



State/County/Municipal Policies



- File CHINS/PINS
- File D&N
- Withhold TANF
- Daytime curfew
- Subpoena school records



- School revenue based on average daily enrollment
- Include school truancy rates in report card
- Claim revenues for students with truancy petition



Court Sanctioning Policies



- Fine parents & students
- Arrest parents
- Contempt citations
- Suspend driver's license
- Detention
- Community service



- Court ordered family or individual therapy
- Court ordered tutoring or health services
- Waive fines with improved attendance





School Policies



- School “F” grading
- No Extra Curriculum Activities
- Suspension/expulsions
- Employ truancy officers
- Grading on participation
- Change Ed. Placement
- Appeals processes
- Consistent attendance policy and practice known by all (students, parents, staff, community agencies)



Policy Change

- End out of school suspensions for being truant
- Finance schools by average daily attendance not one day counts
- Document attendance and truancy by school & set goals
- Less use by courts of detention for truancy
- Remove attendance as a factor in grading



Other Policy Change Needs

- Start secondary schools later in the day
- Provide partial credit options for students
- Conduct a “push out “policy audit of rules and practices
- Raise compulsory attendance age to 18



Best Practices

Truancy Programs must be locally designed
based on the needs of the community and
starting with best practices



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Truancy Reduction – Community Wide Approach

Who should be at the table?

- ✓ Schools
- ✓ Juvenile Justice (Courts & youth services)
- ✓ Law Enforcement (Police & prosecutors)
- ✓ Service Agencies
- ✓ Public health
- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Youth
- ✓ Faith-Based Organizations
- ✓ Local Business Representatives

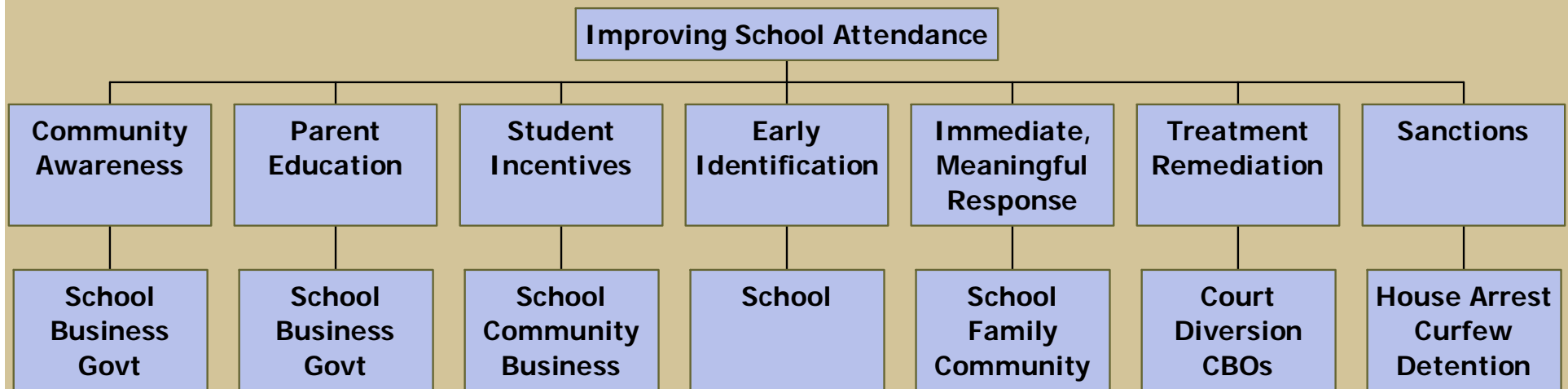


A Continuum of Support

- Incentives
- Prevention
- Early intervention
- Intensive intervention
- Deep-end consequences



A Continuum of Support



Principles of Effective Programs

- Include special attention to health and special education needs
- Data driven decision-making
- Community and Business involvement
- Focus on school transition years
- Include public awareness campaigns
- Meaningful parent involvement planning together toward solutions with school & agencies



Alternatives to Court

- Youth Court
- Mediation
- Quasi-judicial proceedings
- Diversion
- Truancy workshops
- Knock and talks



Jacksonville, FLA

- 22 Target schools, 180 Truancy Quasi-Judicial Hearings annually
- Varying degrees of case management for youth served
- Compliance with mandated attendance meetings tracked at target schools
- Result: increased attendance but little effect on achievement and engagement



King County, Seattle, WA

- Truancy mediation workshops as alternative to court
- Case managers assigned to students at court or after workshop
- Results: 75% reduction in truancy court petitions, lag time between behavior and consequence too long



Community Based Programs

- Community assessment center to help families access services (health, mental health, tutoring, mentoring etc.)
- Community workers such as probation officers or social workers act as liaisons between youth, school and JJ
- Case management services



Community Based Programs

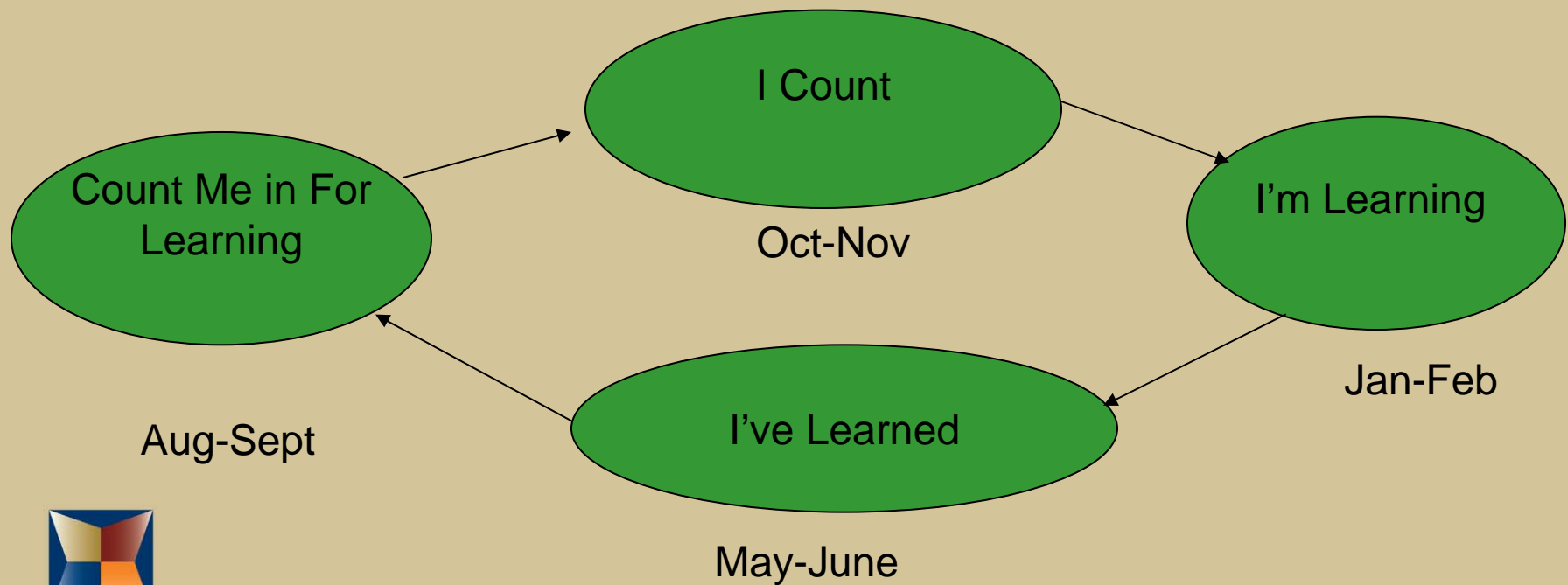
- Walking school bus
- After school programs (recreation & educational)
- Home visitation
- Clothing and school supply drives
- School Attendance Awareness Campaigns



Count Me In For Learning!

Public Education Campaign for School Engagement

School Year Activity Cycle



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School Based Programs

- Attendance recognition awards
- Letters/voice/e- mails to parents
- Catch up classrooms or tutoring
- Student Attendance Review Boards (SARBs)
- Class letters home



School Based Programs

- School climate programs (anti-bullying, tolerance, school involvement activities)
- Attendance specialists in building
- Psych evaluations or social work services



Local Action

Where do we start?

- Know your attendance laws, local policies & their inconsistencies
- Develop a strategic plan across agencies
- Focus on attendance and engagement not just truancy
- Adopt promising practices that “fit” locally



Local Action

Where do we start?

- Create both incentives and graduated sanctions
- Involve students and parents in planning programs to improve attendance and engagement
- Take baselines and track progress



Visit NCSE's Truancy Website

www.schoolengagement.org

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