



Pennsylvania Department of Education

*...inspiring productive, fulfilled life-long
learners*

*High School Reform, Truancy Reduction
and Facilitating Connections*

October 24, 2006

Edward G. Rendell
Governor

Gerald L. Zahorchak
Secretary of Education



Pennsylvania Department of Education

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Migrant Education**
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Mission Statement

To lead and serve the educational community to enable each individual to grow into an inspired, productive, fulfilled life-long learner.



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Clear Standards

Fair

Assessments

Curriculum

Instruction

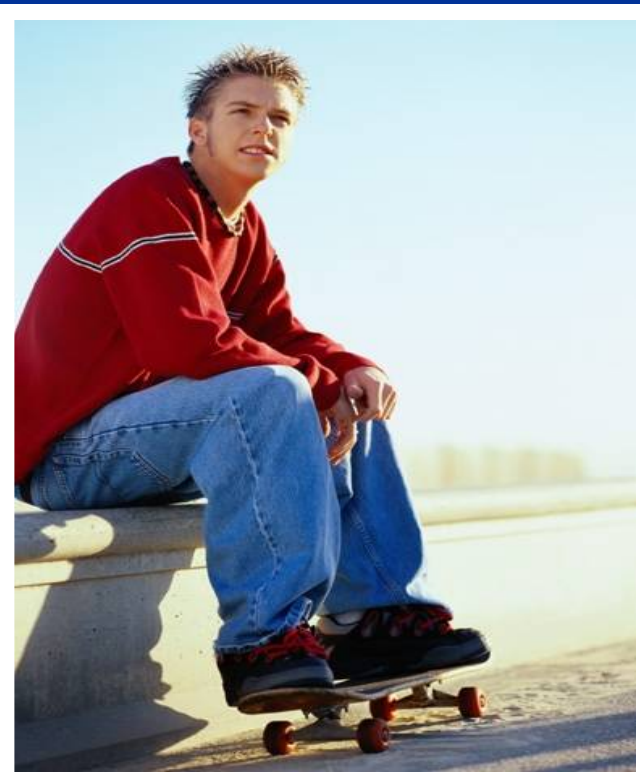
Interventions

*Resources
&
Materials*

*A
Systems Approach
Yields
Strong Results
for
Student Success*



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High School Reform, Truancy Reduction, and Facilitating Connections



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“Dropping out is better conceptualized as an evolving process rather than an event.

It is a process that starts prior to the child entering school.”

A Prospective Longitudinal Study of High-School Dropouts,
Examining Multiple Predictors Across Development
Journal of School Psychology 2000



WHY

DO

STUDENTS

DROP OUT?



**Following are sobering
statistics from a survey
of 467 high school dropouts**

The Silent Epidemic report, March 2006
funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Reasons for dropping out...

- **47 percent of dropouts said classes weren't interesting**
- **43 percent had missed too many days of school and couldn't catch up**
- **38 percent said they had too much freedom and not enough rules in life**
- **35 percent said they quit because they were failing in school**
- **32 percent said they had to get a job and make money**

What might have kept these dropouts in school?

- **81 percent noted the need for more "real-world" learning opportunities**
- **75 percent wanted smaller classes with more individual instruction**
- **71 percent yearned for better communication between parents and schools and more involvement from parents**

Small Group Activity

- What are some reasons that **your** students have dropped out of school?

Predictors for Later School Dropout (Middle and High School)

- Problem behaviors
- School performance
- Grade retention
- Parent involvement
- Gender
- Socio-Economic Status
- Stressful life events
- Mobility
- Absenteeism
- Disciplinary problems
- Self-report – how likely to graduate

Who Will Drop Out from School? Key Predictors from the Literature
Children's Institute, January 2004

What can we do to make school a positive experience for ALL students?



Pennsylvania's Strategies

- **High School Reform**
- **Truancy Reduction**
- **Facilitating Connections**



Pennsylvania Profile

- **501 school districts in the Commonwealth**
- **3,253 public schools**
- **2,119,481 children enrolled in 2004-05 (pre-K through 12th grade)**
- **1,828,089 of those children enrolled in public schools**

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High School Reform

- **Project 720 (PA's initiative)**
 - * *Goal is to create personalized, student-centered, high school environments*
- **Challenging college and career prep core curriculum**
- **Align school district and postsecondary expectations**
- **Adolescent Literacy Plan**

Project 720- PA High School Reform

- Local level assessments**
- Make better use of school time**
- Increased staff professional development**
- Smaller learning environments**
- Career and technical education**
- Increase role of counselor/career and future planning**

“A large number of high school reform strategies... employ interest-based programs, including career and technical education, as a way to increase student motivation and engagement.”

from “Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century,” position paper, The Association of Career and Technical Education, January 2006

School Requirements....

- 1. School Improvement Teams**
- 2. Advisory Boards for input to PDE**
- 3. Mid-Year/End of Year Reporting**

What is working in PA...

- **Literacy coaches**
- **Flexible teaching schedules**
- **Small learning communities and career academies**
- **Acquiring/implementing technology**
- **Assigning staff as “family advocates”**

“Policymakers and education decision makers are now realizing that **support for pre-schoolers and elementary school students **must be sustained through the secondary grades** to keep achievement and attainment gains from fading as students face the academic and social challenges of their middle and high school years.”**

*Locating the Dropout Crisis
Center for Social Organization of Schools
Johns Hopkins University, 2004*

Engaging High School and Middle School Students

“Programs that seek consistent attendance from elementary school students must primarily satisfy parents. In contrast, older students have much more independence and usually make their own choices about how to spend their time.”

Hours That Count, The After-School Corporation
Hamilton Fish Institute, June 2005

PA Youth in Transition

- Collaborative effort between Pennsylvania Departments of Education, Labor & Industry, and Public Welfare
- Purpose: Establish community partnerships to target PA dropouts and students “aging out” of foster care
- 4-6 grantees/\$854,000 available
- Integration with existing state initiatives such as Project 720...

PA Youth In Transition Components

- **Connect educational options with postsecondary education and training**
- **Connections to employers and work**
- **Integrated into High School Reform/Project 720**
- **Coordinated/Cross-Agency Supports**
- **Mentoring**
- **Youth Voice and Leadership**
- **Financial Literacy Education**



Truancy

**Most
importantly,
students need
to be...**

IN SCHOOL!

TRUANCY REDUCTION EFFORTS

Preventing truancy requires the support of schools, families, and communities. Truancy prevention efforts can be school-based, court-based, or community-based, but the best efforts incorporate all three components and provide a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies.

(Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention)

Truancy reduction programs may include:

- Parent/guardian & family involvement.
- A **continuum of support**, including incentives & consequences for good, improved, and poor attendance.
- **Collaboration** among schools, courts, law enforcement agencies, social services providers, businesses, and faith-based and youth-serving agencies.
- Tangible goals/measures.
- Effective record-keeping procedures.
- **Community-wide expectation** for school attendance.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention online resources "Truancy Prevention: Empowering Students, Schools and Communities" at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/truancy/index.html>

Pennsylvania Truancy Toolkit

- **Legal Responsibilities (compulsory attendance, inter-agency collaboration, confidentiality)**
- **Truancy Elimination Plan**
- **Implementation Tools and Strategies**
 - **Sample Forms/Letters**
 - **Effective Programs**
 - **Available Funding**
 - **Truancy Rate Reporting Requirements**

Connections



Project 720 Strategy - Dual Enrollment

- **A concurrent enrollment program**
- **\$8 million in 2006-2007**
- **School Districts/AVTS**
- **Supplemental grants available for “at-risk” student population**

Integrating Service Learning/SSP

- **Learn and Serve America**
- **Dropout prevention grantees will receive 2006-2007 Learn and Serve funds**
- **Various program categories**
- **Promote academic and personal growth**
- **Address real needs of communities**

Young people having the power to make and implement decisions together with a share of the responsibility for the outcomes.

Youth participation has three essential elements:

- ❖ **Youth making change**
- ❖ **Youth directing their own activity**
- ❖ **Youth taking responsibility.**

Three Key Strategies to Engaging Older Students

- (1) Offer students **choices**
- (2) Give students a sense of **autonomy**
- (3) Foster feelings of **affiliation** with a group of peers and caring adults

Hours That Count, The After-School Corporation
Hamilton Fish Institute, June 2005

YOUTH VOICE!

- **Student-centered...**
activities which build skills and promote a sense of mastery and competence, based on students' personal choice.

YOUTH VOICE!

- **Student-run...**
providing students' with **REAL** decision-making authority about program design and implementation.

YOUTH VOICE!

- **Student-designed...**
academic enrichment
activities which contribute
to students' social and
emotional growth.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

- **Afterschool programming**
- **Academic enrichment activities**
- **Parental involvement activities**
- **Performance Measures**
 - **Increasing % of students who meet or exceed state academic standards in reading/math**
 - **Improvement in regular school attendance, classroom performance, and a reduction in disciplinary referrals**

Benefits of Afterschool Programming

- Provides an alternative to the unwise choices students can make for their afterschool activity
- **2-6 pm** on school days are **'prime time for juvenile crime'**
(www.fightcrime.org)

“Feeling connected to school is a significant advantage for adolescents as they transition to adulthood....

School connectedness is also good for academic achievement...”

Improving the Odds: The Untapped Power of Schools to Improve the Health of Teens, Journal of School Health, April 2002

Other Initiatives

- **EAP Tutoring**
- **Accountability Block Grants**
- **Migrant Education**
- **Refugee Education Program**
- **PA Homeless Children's Initiative**
- **Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program**



**Parental
Involvement
is Critical to
Success!**

When parents are involved in their children's education...

- Students do better in school and in life.**
- Parents become empowered.**
- Teacher morale improves.**
- Schools get better.**
- Communities grow stronger.**

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

www.ncpie.org

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Schools can...

- send informational packets to new parents**
- offer special events for parents of incoming kindergarten students**
- check with parents when students are truant or late to school**
- involve parents as members of governance/planning committees**

Large Group Discussion

Brainstorm **specific ways** each of you – in your role as administrators, counselors, teachers, youth workers... – **can facilitate ‘connections’** within your school or program.

Program Strategies

- **Use the best thinking of your students, staff, teachers, administrators, board members, community members, parents, and business people to determine what will work in your area.**

Positive Outcomes

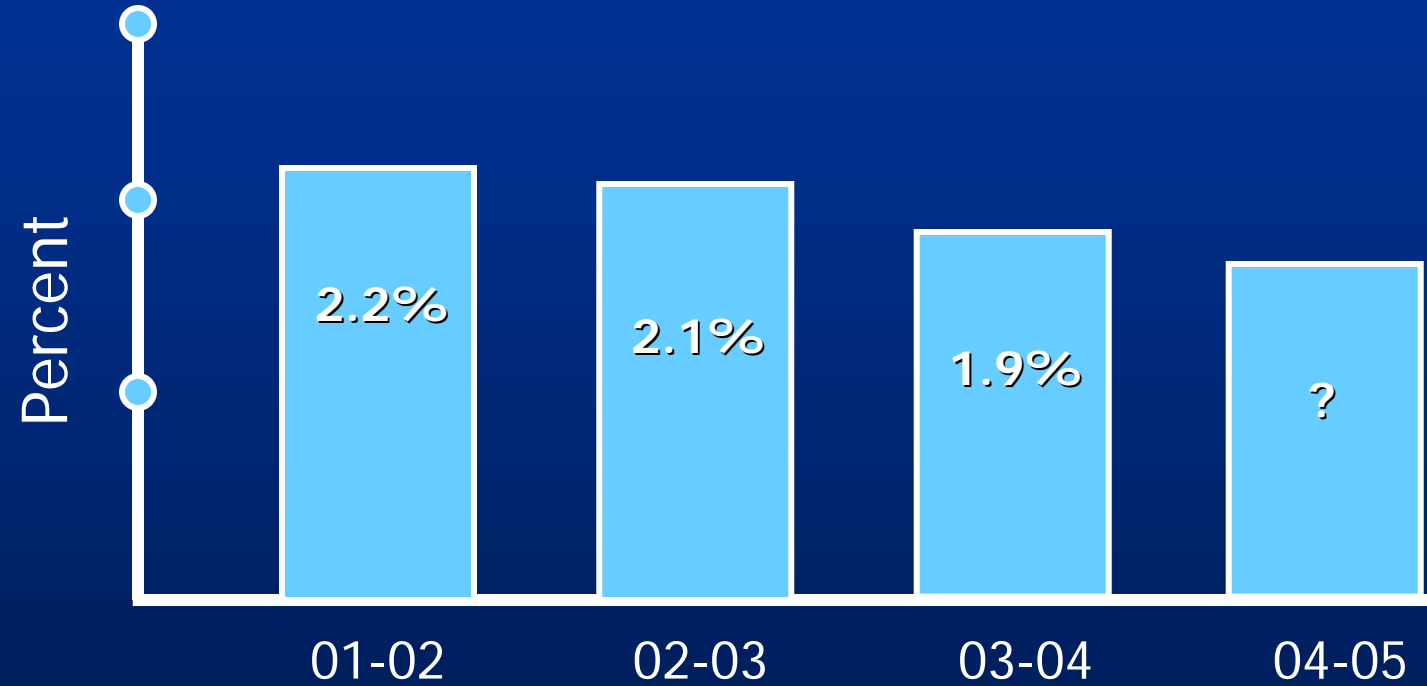


**Are
these
efforts
working?**





Historical Trend



Pennsylvania Statewide Dropout Rate

**Any
Questions?**



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