



**NCSE** | National Center for School Engagement

**Blueprints for Violence Prevention Programs  
That Reduce Truancy  
and/or Improve School Attendance**

**National Center for School Engagement**

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303 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 400 Denver, CO 80203  
303/837-8466**

**[www.schoolengagement.org](http://www.schoolengagement.org)**

## **Blueprints for Violence Prevention Programs That Reduce Truancy and/or Improve School Attendance**

This report describes Blueprints for Violence Prevention programs that address truancy, school attendance, and/or student achievement concerns, and the evaluation studies that have tracked these programs' outcomes. Programs become "blueprints" model programs based upon standards of program effectiveness developed by the Center for the Study of the Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The programs described here are grouped by setting: school based programs (10), community based programs (3), school and community based programs (3), and programs offered in other settings (2). Each listing includes name of the program, type of program, age of students covered, setting, program goals, program description, study design, study sample, and study outcomes. This report offers conclusions based on results from the 18 programs featured.

### **SCHOOL BASED PROGRAMS**

#### **Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (formerly Preventive Intervention)**

*Program Type:* Cognitive-Behavioral Training; School - Individual Strategies

*Age:* Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle - Junior

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program aims to prevent an increase in school failure experiences among high-risk adolescents. The program also strives to reduce school and community delinquency, including school-based problems, unemployment, criminal behavior, and drug and alcohol abuse.

*Program Description:* The intervention consists of four components: (a) collecting up-to-date information about students' actions from interviews with teachers and records of daily attendance, tardiness, and disciplinary action; (b) providing systematic feedback to students and/or parents about the students' actions; (c) attaching value to students' actions (e.g., students could earn points toward a special field trip by coming to school, being on time to class, receiving no disciplinary action); and (d) helping students determine strategies for modifying their behavior and thus earning more points. The program lasts for two years, with booster sessions available during the following year.

*Study Design:* Eighty 7<sup>th</sup> graders, including 40 from a low-income, inner-city school and 40 from a middle-class, suburban school, were matched into pairs based on relevant school failure variables. Each pair was then randomly assigned to the intervention or control group for a two year period. The control group received no treatment. During a one year post-intervention period, biweekly booster sessions were available to the experimental group. Fewer than 50% of participants attended these booster sessions; notes from the meetings were mailed to participants who did not attend the booster

sessions. Sixty three of the original 80 students participated in an interview on their employment, drug and alcohol use, and criminal behaviors during the post-intervention year. Court records of participants were analyzed five years after the intervention; at that point in time, 60 students remained in the sample.

*Sample:* Sixty six students completed the two year program, including 44 males and 22 females, with a mean age of 15 ½. Thirty six of these participants came from the suburban school while 30 were from the urban school; 42% were African American and 58% were white. Of the 66 students who completed the program, 63 subjects participated in the follow-up interview; school records could only be obtained for 58 of these students. Finally, 60 subjects with a mean age of 19 ½ participated in the five-year follow-up.

*Outcomes:* Significant differences were found after the second program year when intervention subjects' grades and attendance significantly improved while control subjects' grades and attendance continued to decline. One year after the end of the program, intervention youths were significantly more likely to have been employed and were less likely to have been involved in criminal behavior. Intervention youths also reported significantly lower rates of illegal drug use (3% of treatment youth vs. 16% of control youth), with the exception of marijuana and alcohol use, for which the intervention yielded no significant differences. Five years after the end of the program, intervention youths were 66% less likely to have a juvenile record than control youths.

## **Career Academy**

*Program Type:* Academic Services; Employment – Vocational; School - Environmental Strategies

*Age:* Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The goals of the Career Academy are to enhance high-, medium-, and low-risk students' engagement and performance in high school and provide them with the credentials and skills needed to make successful transitions to post-secondary education and, eventually, a career.

*Program Description:* Career Academies are school based programs that seek to reduce dropout rates, as well as improve school performance and career readiness among high school youth. A Career Academy (CA) is organized as a school-within-a-school, where students work in "small learning communities." Each small learning community involves a small number of students working with the same group of teachers for three or four years of high school with the aim of creating a more personalized and supportive learning environment for students. CAs use a career theme to integrate academic and vocational curricula. In an effort to build connections between school and work and to provide students with a range of career development and work based learning opportunities, CAs establish partnerships with local employers.

*Study Design:* A large scale, multi-site, random assignment research design was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of CAs in achieving their goals. The researchers studied 9 CAs with a sample size of 1,764 students. Students in the sample were identified in the 8th or 9th grade and were followed through their senior year of high school. Students were identified as either posing a high-, medium-, or low-risk for dropping out of school, based on selected background characteristics and prior school experiences. Because each of the characteristics used to define the subgroups was measured before students were randomly assigned to a study group, there were no systematic differences in observed background characteristics between the treatment group and the control group within the three risk subgroups.

Data utilized in the study consisted of survey information provided by both Academy and non-Academy students in the study sample, performance indicators obtained from school records and transcripts, and standardized test scores from a test the researchers administered to the sample of students. Qualitative data was collected during field visits to each participating site.

*Sample:* The final sample size was  $n=1,764$ . Of these, 345 were male, and 45 were Caucasian. Ten sites were initially selected for the evaluation. One of the initial CAs was disbanded after 2 years in the study and was unable to provide sufficient follow-up data to be included in the impact analysis. The attrition rate reported for the treatment group was generally low, estimated at about 10%.

*Outcomes:* Among treatment group students with a high risk of dropping out, there was a significant reduction in dropout rates, improvement in attendance, increase in academic course-taking, and increase in the likelihood of earning enough credits to graduate on time. Among treatment group students with a low risk of dropping out, there was an increase in the likelihood of graduating on time. Treatment group students across risk-levels experienced an increase in vocational course-taking without reducing their likelihood of completing a basic core academic curriculum. When findings are averaged across groups, there are only slight reductions in dropout rates and modest increases in other measures of school engagement; the only significant impact was for more positive youth development experiences in the past year. CAs did not improve standardized math and reading achievement scores.

High-contrast CAs, those intervention sites where the school environment is very different from non-CA schools, produced a statistically significant lower dropout rate among medium-risk students, as well as an increase in completion of a core academic curriculum. Conversely, low-contrast CAs produced higher dropout rates, reduced attendance, and lower rates of academic course-taking for medium-risk students.

### **Chronic Truancy Initiative**

*Program Type:* School - Individual Strategies

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The Chronic Truancy Initiative (CTI) is a school and community-based program designed to reduce absenteeism and other problems within families of identified elementary and kindergarten chronic truant youth.

*Program Description:* The CTI aims to decrease absenteeism among those identified as chronic truants. School attendance records are reviewed by school staff. Students who miss 20% or more days of school in a six-week period are defined as chronic truants. To reduce chronic truancy, attendance records are reviewed regularly. After truants are identified, a variety of increasingly serious measures are taken. Upon first being identified as truant, a letter is sent to the parents. If no improvement in attendance is observed, then the student is referred to a school attendance officer. Attendance records are reviewed again after the student is referred to the attendance officer; if improvement does not occur, then the child and family are referred to a social service agency. If the student remains truant after these interventions, then a uniformed police officer visits the family's home, along with the attendance officer. Finally, if attendance has not improved after these interventions have taken place, the family may be prosecuted under state compulsory attendance laws.

*Study Design:* Three elementary schools located in a Midwestern city participated in the CTI. Attendance data was collected from the school district's research and evaluation unit. A total of 281 students met the authors' definition of chronically truant. A pre- and post-intervention analysis was conducted in which student attendance was reviewed before and after each intervention to determine improvement. In addition, a paired samples t-test was used to determine if differences in attendance were statistically significant.

*Sample:* School A was composed of 50% Caucasian, 11% African American, 34% Hispanic, 4% Native American and 1% Asian youth. School B included 35% Caucasian, 8% African American, 52% Hispanic, 4% Native American and 1% Asian students. School C comprised 43% Caucasian, 18% African American, 37% Hispanic, and 2% Native American youth. Eighty five percent of the target school population and over 94% of the participants in this sample were eligible for the free or reduced school lunch program.

*Outcomes:* Attendance significantly improved among all truants during each of the first two intervention stages, receiving a letter from the principals and being referred to the attendance officer. Attendance for all truants improved slightly but non-significantly during the third stage of the intervention, referral to social services. However, attendance was *reduced* slightly but non-significantly for all truants during the final stage of intervention, contact by police; this final phase signified a negative effect of participation in the intervention.

Of the 281 students in the sample, 204 met the definition of a chronic truant and 77 were considered nonchronic (missing less than 20% of school days). When data were re-examined, the positive effects of the first two intervention stages remained significant

among the chronically truant. Effects on attendance for nonchronic truants, however, were *negative* although nonsignificant.

### **Comer School Development Program**

*Program Type:* School - Environmental Strategies

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle - Junior

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The Comer School Development Program (SDP) aims to create a positive, supportive, and wholesome school climate devoid of interpersonal violence. The program is also designed to promote and support children's development in six interrelated domains: physical, language, ethical, social, psychological, and academic.

*Program Description:* The Comer School Development Program (SDP) addresses various aspects of school climate related to the prevention and reduction of violence in the school setting. There are three main program components: (a) a school planning team that involves parents and school staff in making the critical decisions that shape school policy, influence school climate, and direct school programs; (b) a student and staff support team composed of mental health professionals and child development experts, whose task is to identify and/or develop ways to address developmentally and socially appropriate responses to issues affecting students and staff, including violence; and (c) a parent involvement program that engages parents in meaningful ways in the life of the school. Because the program adheres to the philosophy that each school should determine its own academic and social goals, the SDP specifies only the processes and structures needed to establish, monitor, and modify these goals.

*Study Design 1:* A four-year randomized experiment featured 23 middle schools, repeated measurement with more than 12,000 students and 2,000 staff, a survey of more than 1,000 parents, and extensive access to students' records. Prince George's County, Maryland was selected for study because of its predominantly African-American school population and its considerable internal variation in household economic standing. Twenty-three of the 25 middle schools in Prince George's County were included in the study. Students were studied in three adjacent cohorts that began in seventh grade in 1991, 1992, or 1993. Since students attend middle schools for 2 years, the total study period in these schools was 4 years.

Each year, questionnaires were used to assess staff judgments of program implementation quality, student and staff judgments of school climate, and students' reports of their social and psychological development. Averaging across schools, years, and the two questionnaires, 81% of eligible school staff completed questionnaires. During the program's second year, a telephone survey was conducted with a random sample of parents from each school who had given consent for their child to be in the study. A total of 1,046 parents completed the survey, for an average per-school response rate of 54% of those selected into the random sample. In addition, school records were used for annual assessments of each student's school performance, and interviews were conducted with

the coordinator and the facilitators of the county School Development Program. At the end of the first and last years, telephone interviews were conducted with each principal, and in one year a telephone interview was also conducted with a random sample of parents from each school.

*Sample 1:* The eligible population consisted of 22,314 students who were enrolled in the 23 middle schools when the early-seventh-grade questionnaire was distributed. Across the three cohorts, active consent was obtained by 77% of the eligible students. Because active consent was only obtained from 50% of the Latino students, they were excluded from the sample. This left 12,398 students in the longitudinal sample; these participants were 66% African American, 24% Caucasian, 4% Asian American, and 6% of other ethnic backgrounds. According to student reports, 63% of students in the sample lived with both biological parents and 12% lived in single parent families; 83% of fathers or male guardians and 69% of mothers or female guardians were employed full time. Five percent of mothers did not complete high school, 34% were high school graduates, and 35% were college graduates.

*Outcomes 1:* The most evident program effect related to academic achievement, as the Comer schools showed less of a drop in grade point average when the three cohorts were combined. No reliable main effects emerged in regard to staff or student ratings of school climate.

*Study Design 2:* Using 5th through 8th grade students, the Comer School Development Program was evaluated in 10 inner city Chicago schools over four years, contrasting them with 9 randomly selected no-treatment comparison schools. All schools, whether treatment or controls, wanted to be in the Comer program. The schools entered the study at differing times, either in the fall of 1991, 1992, or 1993. Data collection continued in all schools until the end of the 1996-1997 school year. In the first year a school entered the study, student outcome questionnaires were administered in late fall as a pretest. Thereafter, testing took place at the end of every school year. Each spring, students completed a questionnaire focusing on school climate. Later in the spring, staff filled out a questionnaire about the quality of program implementation and perceptions of school climate. Two study designs were utilized to test the impact of the Comer SDP: a cross sectional design and a three and four year longitudinal design.

*Sample 2:* The schools in this study were located in economically disadvantaged African-American neighborhoods in Chicago. Most of the students had parents or guardians with no education beyond high school, and more children lived in homes without two biological parents than with them. Average test scores began at about the 30th percentile; their standard deviations suggest that very few students scored above the 50th percentile.

*Outcomes 2:* At the school level, results indicated that the program reduced negative social behaviors. Students in Comer schools reported relatively less acting out over time and less anger than youth in control schools. For both reading and math, program schools started about 3 points below the controls and finished at the same level; however, these are considered small changes by conventional statistical standards.

*Study Design 3:* During the 1982-83 school year, four elementary schools were selected to participate in the first phasing-in of the Social Development Program in the Benton Harbor Area schools. The following criteria were used in selecting the schools: (a) principal's interest in the program, (b) low level of student achievement, and (c) high rate of student behavior problems. Three additional schools were selected during the 1984-85 school year. The purpose of the analysis was to determine what, if any, changes occurred in student achievement and other school-related behaviors from the first year of the program implementation to the 1985-86 academic year.

*Sample 3:* The school populations varied from 341 to 864 students. The student populations of all four schools were considered low-income; ethnic composition ranged from 76 to 94 percent African American. As indicated by scores on the California Achievement Test (CAT), students enrolled in three of the four schools were functioning below national standards at all grade levels.

*Outcomes 3:* Program schools experienced gains in Reading, Mathematics, and the Total Battery on the CAT. In Reading, the average gain for the program schools equaled that of the district as a whole at the second-grade level and exceeded the district gains at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade levels. In Mathematics, the average gain for program schools exceeded that of the district at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels. The proportion of students in program schools achieving at least 75 percent of the objectives in Mathematics ranged from 45 percent in 1982 to 78 percent in 1985. In 1983 and 1985 the increases in the proportion of students achieving at least 75 percent of the objectives in Mathematics were larger in program schools than in the district as a whole. Program schools also experienced a larger increase than the district as a whole among students attaining at least 75 percent of the objectives in Reading.

The number of suspension days for program schools declined steadily between 1982-83 and 1984-85. Suspensions decreased by 8 percent in 1983-84 and by 19 percent in 1984-85. In comparison, the district as a whole experienced a 34 percent increase in suspensions in 1984-85. Absenteeism among program schools declined by 18 percent between 1982-83 and 1984-85. Corporal punishments in program schools declined by 80 percent in 1983-84 and 100 percent in 1984-85. The district as a whole experienced a 23 percent decline in corporal punishments in 1983-84 and 36 percent in 1984-85.

### **Operation SAVE KIDS**

*Program Type:* Diversion; Parent Training; School - Individual Strategies

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* Operation SAVE KIDS aims to reduce truancy and instill a sense of responsibility in students and their parents.

*Program Description:* Operation Save Kids is a truancy program that requires school personnel to monitor school attendance closely and contact parents promptly if their children have three days of unexcused absence. Parents must respond, outlining measures they have taken to ensure that their children are attending school. If a child continues to be truant, the school notifies the prosecutor or law enforcement agency to request that criminal charges be filed against the parents. However, the prosecutor can offer families a deferred prosecution diversion program designed to strengthen family relationships and encourage youths to go to school.

*Study Design:* A one-group, pretest-posttest study was conducted in Peoria, Arizona. Operation Save Kids was implemented in 15 school districts (12 elementary and 2 high schools), in 10 cities and towns, in western Maricopa County (more than 60 schools & 56,000 students). By the end of the 1995-1996 school year, WESTMARC had contact with 292 truancy students and their families.

*Sample:* No further sample description was provided.

*Outcomes:* Within the first two years of the program, daytime juvenile property rates declined by 65% and citywide truancy was cut in half. When parents were notified by mail of their child's absence, attendance increased for 72.2% of the students and only 27.8% were referred for prosecution.

### **Positive Action through Holistic Education (Project PATHE)**

*Program Type:* School - Environmental Strategies; School - Individual Strategies  
*Age:* Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* Project PATHE seeks to increase bonding to the school and reduce school disorder through the implementation of broad-based structural changes; these changes might include adopting different disciplinary procedures, management practices, or school activities. The program also aims to increase student educational and occupational attainment.

*Program Description:* The school-wide intervention has six major components: (a) staff, student, and community participation in revising school policies and designing and managing school change; (b) organizational changes aimed at increasing academic performance; (c) organizational changes aimed at increasing school climate; (d) vocational preparation; (e) academic and affective services for high-risk individuals; and (f) special academic and counseling services for low-achieving and disruptive students. Individualized treatment plans addressing academic or behavior objectives were implemented with high-risk students by specialists. The programs mostly calls for counseling or tutoring sessions. Other activities include peer counseling, rap sessions, field trips, and referrals to other agencies when necessary. Target students are closely

monitored, and parents are called after three absences. Specialists also meet with parents following disciplinary incidents.

*Study Design:* This project utilized a nonequivalent comparison group design involving all teachers and students in five middle schools (four program and one control) and four high schools (three program and one control) in low-income, predominantly African American, urban and rural areas in Charleston County, South Carolina, between 1981 and 1983. The school, rather than the individual, is the unit of analysis; the individuals surveyed in 1983 are not necessarily the same individuals surveyed in 1981. The entire student and teacher population was surveyed in all years except 1981, when a random sample of 300 students was taken in the high schools. Survey response rates averaged 79%, 82%, and 86% for all schools in 1981, 1982, and 1983 respectively.

*Sample:* Seven schools were located in inner city Charleston and the other two were located in a rural, impoverished area on James Island. The inner city schools were nearly 100% African American; the rural schools were each 68% and 79% African American.

*Outcomes:* Treatment high schools showed significant decreases in serious delinquency, drug involvement, suspensions, and school punishments, while the treatment junior high saw significant decreases in suspensions. Student alienation significantly decreased in the treatment schools. Attachment to school significantly increased in treatment middle schools but significantly decreased in the comparison school. School attendance increased significantly in treatment and comparison high schools and self-concept significantly increased in all schools except the comparison middle school. Treatment students experienced slightly more academic success and graduated at a higher rate than control students.

### **School Breakfast Clubs**

*Program Type:* School - Environmental Strategies

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle - Junior

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The goals of School Breakfast Clubs include providing breakfast for children who might otherwise start the school day without having eaten; establishing a positive relationship at the start of the school day, thereby improving attitude, behavior, and motivation to learn and helping to reduce lateness and poor attendance; and offering healthy eating choices, providing the opportunity for children to sample and hopefully develop preferences for healthy options.

*Program Description:* In 1999, the United Kingdom Department of Health announced a national pilot scheme to promote the development of school breakfast clubs across England.

*Study Design:* The design was a cluster randomized controlled trial in which 6,076 pupils from 30 schools were randomly assigned into the breakfast club or control conditions.

Follow-up measures were collected 3 months and 12 months after the beginning of the program.

*Sample:* The final sample of 6,076 students was 50% male and 50% female with a mean age of approximately 10 years. Sixty seven percent of the participants were in primary school and 33% were in secondary school. Ninety three percent of the control group participants were Caucasian, 6% were Asian, and nearly 2% were Black. Over 90% of the students in both groups reported eating breakfast sometimes or always. Additionally, over 70% of parents in both groups reported that their children had low emotional stress at baseline. The majority of students from both groups reported no classes or days of school skipped within the last month.

*Outcomes:* Overall, the analyses revealed that the intervention group showed greater improvement in concentration than the control group on the first and second follow-up measures. Fewer secondary students in the intervention group reported having skipped classes on at least one day within the last month and having skipped at least one day of school within the last month, as compared to students in the control group. Lastly, it was found that primary students in the program reported eating more fruit for breakfast than control students.

### **School Transitional Environment Program (STEP)**

*Program Type:* Academic Services; School - Environmental Strategies

*Age:* Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The primary goal of the School Transitional Environment Program (STEP) is to address and ease major adolescent life transitions, especially the transition from junior high school to high school. The program focuses on increasing the availability of social support to adolescents experiencing this transition and reducing the complexities involved in making the transition.

*Program Description:* The School Transitional Environment Program (STEP) seeks to mediate the negative effects for adolescents that are associated with making the transition from junior high to high school. Specifically, the program focuses on increasing social support and decreasing the task-oriented difficulties for adolescents who are experiencing this transition. The program uses two components in order to accomplish these goals. First, the program restructures the role of homeroom teachers, who take on additional roles as counselors and school administrators to the program participants. Second, the program seeks to reorganize the social system the student is entering. STEP students are assigned to classrooms in four of their classes only with other program participants in order to keep a constant peer group in a relatively fixed location of the school.

*Study Design 1:* During the summer prior to their freshman year, students were randomly selected from among 450 students entering a large urban high school with a total

enrollment of approximately 1,700. Students needed to meet specific criteria in order to qualify for participation in the project: students needed to demonstrate satisfactory adjustment to school (for example, meeting all grade and attendance requirements in 8th grade for promotion into high school) and could not be considered in need of special mental health programming. The treatment group included 65 participants. The control group of 120 students met the same qualifying criteria and were matched according to sex, age, and ethnic background.

Analyses were conducted in order to determine whether the program was successful in mediating the negative consequences often associated with the transition from middle school to high school. Evaluations were conducted at the midpoint and at the end of the academic year. Of the 185 students originally selected to participate, 59 treatment and 113 control students completed all of the evaluations. Chi-square analyses indicated that there were no significant differences between the final samples and the original samples in terms of sex, age, and ethnic background.

*Sample 1:* The only demographic information provided was the population make-up of the school. The ethnic composition of the school was 57% African American, 19% Caucasian, 22% Hispanic, and 2% other; most students came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

*Outcomes 1:* Short term effects found in the research study indicate that students who participated in the STEP program were more likely to maintain their academic level one year after transitioning to the new school, and less likely to be absent than control students. STEP students also had a more positive self-concept and a higher positive perception of the school social environment. STEP was shown to be effective in reducing levels of emotional, behavioral, and academic dysfunction following school transition. Long term effects illustrated that program youth were less likely to experience school failure and dropout.

Specifically, in comparison to control group participants, Project STEP participants who experienced a middle to high school transition showed higher academic performance on both school attendance and grade point average which was sustained through a five year follow-up; reported a higher perceived self-concept that remained stable through the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year; and were more likely to report positive perceptions of their school environment through the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Also in comparison to control students, Project STEP participants who experienced a transition into junior high school after one year of participation reported making more positive adjustments and maintained positive perceptions of the school environment; performed better academically; and showed better teacher reports of student behavior and adjustment.

*Study Design 2:* This replication of Project STEP was a two-year non-randomized study looking at the transition of adolescents into middle school or junior high; the transition year could have been either the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. The sample consisted of 1,204

treatment students and 761 control students. Treatment students attended one of four schools that had adopted core STEP elements, while the control students attended one of four different schools where STEP elements had not been introduced. The schools represented a wide variety of geographic, demographic, and structural characteristics. The primary interest of researchers was the impact of Project STEP on easing the transition for students. Researchers collected student self-report measures by asking teachers to administer surveys in their classrooms; there was an 85% return rate on these surveys. In addition, researchers collected information from teachers on each student regarding behavioral adjustment of the student.

*Sample 2:* The total sample included 1,204 students who were enrolled in STEP schools and 761 students who were enrolled in non-STEP schools. The sample demographics indicated that 17% of the participants were non-Caucasian, while 44% came from a household in which the highest level of parental education was high school graduation. Because the structure of the schools varied, transitions were defined differently; 58% of the students made the transition in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, while 42% of the students made the transition in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. School demographics indicate that the mean entering class size for treatment schools and control schools were 295 and 179, respectively. In addition, the overall average size of the STEP schools was 880 while the overall size of the non-STEP schools was 434.

*Outcomes 2:* On the measure of perceptions of school environment, analyses revealed that STEP students had a significantly more positive experience than non-STEP students did during the transition year. A correlation was also found between the STEP environment and student outcomes (101 out of 112 correlations were significant), indicating that a positive school environment is significantly associated with positive student adjustment and performance. Specifically, STEP students reported significantly lower levels of school transition stress and better adjustment on measures of school, family and general self-esteem, depression, anxiety, delinquent behavior, and academic performance. Teacher reports on classroom behavior and adjustment were more positive for STEP students; academic and attendance records were significantly more favorable for STEP versus non-STEP students.

### **Taking Charge Program**

*Program Type:* School - Individual Strategies

*Age:* Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The main goal of the Taking Charge Program is to teach skills that are critical to long-term self-sufficiency of pregnant and parenting teenagers. Cognitive-behavioral skills-training programs provide many features identified in successful programs for adolescent mothers.

*Program Description:* The Taking Charge Program is a task-centered, cognitive-behavioral, school-based group intervention developed specifically for helping adolescent

Mexican American mothers improve problem-focused coping behavior, social problem-solving skills, and school achievement. The program curriculum is delivered over the course of eight weeks. The program's main objective is to teach skills that are critical to long-term self-sufficiency of pregnant and parenting teenagers.

*Study Design:* The investigation was a randomized, experimental group design with pre- and posttest and follow-up measurement. The target population for the study was pregnant and parenting female students. The sample was drawn from an urban school district on the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas. Five of the district's 12 high schools were selected for participation in the study. All female students who were under eight months pregnant or currently parenting children were invited to participate. Of 86 women who initially entered the study, 73 completed the pretest-posttest phase; the treatment group consisted of 33 women, while 40 participants were in the control group.

*Sample:* Preliminary analyses revealed no differences between groups in age, grade in school, ethnicity, parenting status, and living arrangements. The average age of the participants was seventeen. Of the 73 participants, 70 identified themselves as Mexican or Mexican American. Forty-one of the participants had one child, 11 had two children, and 17 were pregnant for the first time.

*Outcomes:* The results indicated significant social skills improvement in the treatment group on the Rational Problem-Solving Subscale (RPS). Differences were also found on the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE), with the treatment group showing significant improvement in problem-focused coping behavior while the controls coping behavior decreased. The mean attendance rate increased for treatment group participants and decreased for controls. Grade point average also increased in the treatment groups while decreasing in the control group. These effects were maintained at the thirty-day follow-up. Overall, the participants in the treatment group showed improvement over the control participants on all measures.

## **Truant Recovery Program**

*Program Type:* Police Crime Prevention

*Age:* Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* School

*Program Goals:* The primary goal of this program is to return truants to school as soon as possible.

*Program Description:* The Truant Recovery Program authorizes police jurisdictions to make contact with students on the streets during school hours. If the students do not have a valid excuse slip, they are taken into temporary custody. The students are then taken to the Student Welfare and Attendance Office (SWAT). The SWAT personnel contact the parents of the student, and counseling is given to student and parent before the parent returns the student to school. If the parent cannot be contacted, the student is returned to

school by SWAT personnel. The school and SWAT office monitor the student's attendance more closely in future. Three additional program components are designed to provide accountability and consequences: all contacted juveniles are screened for probation violations and bench warrants; attendance records are reviewed with habitual truants being referred to juvenile court; and students may be enrolled in a Suspension Alternative Class, an in-school endeavor that promotes students' reintegration into schooling.

*Study Design:* A pre-post design was used to examine the Truant Recovery Program, which drew a random sample of 178 students that had been taken to the SWAT office in 1997. Detailed criminal and juvenile justice data were collected for each truant for two years before pick-up by police and for 18-21 months after the contact. Academic performance information was collected for three years prior to the contact and two years afterwards. No control group was used in the study.

*Sample:* The sample was 69% male and 31% female. Participants were 60% African American, 25% Hispanic, 8% Asian, and 3% Caucasian. Truants' median age was 15; 30% were 13 years or younger and approximately 10% were older than 16.

*Outcomes:* During the 18-21 month follow-up, contacts with local police increased. Comparisons of academic performance showed that the vast majority of truants continued to struggle in school after the truancy sweep. Approximately 75% percent became involved in at least one disciplinary incident, more than 90% recorded an unexcused absence, and 88% received at least one below-average D or F grade.

Despite these continued struggles, school performance did improve in certain aspects. The students got into trouble less often and were punished less frequently, skipped school less (generally missing less school), and improved their grades.

## **COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS**

### **Ada County Attendance Court**

*Program Type:* Juvenile Justice, Other

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary

*Setting:* Community

*Program Goals:* Ada County Attendance Court aims to reduce school truancy and tardiness, thereby decreasing the likelihood of dropout and serious future offenses.

*Program Description:* Ada County Attendance Court is a diversion program designed to reduce student absenteeism. The program operates under the juvenile court's jurisdiction, but is a multiagency partnership. The attendance court cases are usually initiated by a referral from a school administrator. This referral is typically made after the school unsuccessfully attempted to handle the problem internally. An attendance court coordinator investigates the referrals, and ultimately makes the decision whether or not to

set a hearing date. If a hearing date is set, then the school resource officer issues a court summons.

*Study Design:* Direct observations of four court days totaling 15 hours took place between April and May of 2002. Several interviews were also conducted with participants to clarify activities that occurred during the proceedings and to determine the nature of the referral process. Finally, referral sheets provided demographic data, number of absences for current and previous year, case statute, attendance record after the initial hearing, and teachers' perceptions of student progress after the initial hearing.

*Sample:* Fifty four percent of participants were female. Fifty seven percent of students became involved with Attendance Court between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, while the other 43% became involved between kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Fifty-nine percent of students lived with a single mother, 35% lived with both parents, and 6% lived with a single father. Tardies accounted for 8% of referrals, excessive absences for 46%, and a combination of excessive absences and tardies for 46%. The mean number of student absences during the current year for students who were referred to the court was 15.5, whereas the mean number of absences during the previous year for these students was 25.5.

*Outcomes:* The student referral sheets provided some preliminary descriptive statistics for analysis. Sixty-five percent of cases were closed successfully; 9% were either referred to a prosecutor or closed due to the student moving, 6% were closed due to the student being involved with foster care, and 2% were re-opened. Seventy seven percent of students improved attendance after the initial hearing, while 12% did not improve. The remaining students' improvement could not be judged due to withdrawal from school; these students may have moved, entered homeschooling, or been removed from their homes. Finally, 73% of students increased their academic performance as indicated by grades following the initial hearing, while 16% did not improve. Again, the remaining students' grades were not measured for the same withdrawal reasons.

### **Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA)**

*Program Type:* Mentoring - Tutoring

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* Community

*Program Goals:* Big Brothers Big Sisters of America aims to delay or reduce antisocial behaviors, increase academic performance, improve attitudes and behaviors, strengthen peer and family relationships, increase self-concept, and provide social and cultural enrichment.

*Program Description:* The BBBSA program matches volunteer adult mentors with at-risk children and youth, anticipating that caring and supportive relationships will develop. Mentors are selected, screened, and matched with children based on shared goals and interests of the child and adult volunteer. Mentors are expected to meet with the child at

least 3-5 hours per week for a period of 12 months or longer. BBBSA staff monitor the relationship and maintain contact with the mentor, child, and parent/guardian throughout the matched relationship. BBBSA staff can provide advice and guidance to the mentor, as well as support and encouragement.

*Study Design 1:* Sites for this study were selected from eight BBBSA offices nationwide which met the criteria for a large caseload and geographic diversity. The sites included Philadelphia, Rochester, Minneapolis, Columbus, Wichita, San Antonio, and Phoenix. Of the 1,138 youth found eligible for matches, baseline interviews were conducted with 1,107. Half were randomly assigned to a treatment group, for which BBBS matches were made or attempted. The other half were assigned to BBBS waiting lists for 18 months. The matched youth met with their mentors for an average of almost 12 months, with meetings about 3 times a month lasting approximately 4 hours each. The ultimate goal of these visits was to provide a supportive relationship.

*Sample 1:* Of the total 1,138 sample participants at the time of assignment, 959 were available at follow-up including 487 treatment youth and 472 control youth. Of the 487 youth in the treatment group, 378 were matched with a mentor during the study period. Statistical analyses indicated that there were no baseline differences between the treatment and the control group youth. The sample was slightly more than 60% male and over 55% non-Caucasian; of non-Caucasian youth, the participants were 71% African American, 18% Hispanic, 5% biracial, 3% Native American, and 3% other. Sixty-nine percent of the youth came to the program between the ages of 11 and 13. Many of the youth came from poor households, with over 40% receiving either food stamps and/or cash public assistance. Ninety percent of youth lived with one parent, and 5.6% lived with one of their grandparents. Approximately 20% of the parents/guardians did not graduate from high school, and over 35% had completed only high school or earned a GED. Many of the youth in the study had experienced difficult personal situations, including divorce or separation of their parents, family history of substance abuse or domestic violence, or were victims of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse. T-tests performed on the two groups revealed no demographic and descriptive differences between the treatment and control groups at baseline.

*Outcomes 1:* Effects found in the research studies indicated significant reductions in adolescent initiation of alcohol (27%) and illicit drugs (46%), as well as incidences of hitting other people. Adolescents mentored by a Big Brother or Big Sister saw improvements in academic performance and achievement; treatment youth skipped half as many days as did control youth, felt more competent about doing schoolwork, skipped fewer classes, and showed modest gains in grade point averages (marginally significant,  $p = .10$ ). These gains were strongest among minority females. Mentees also experienced improvements in quality of relationship with parents and peer emotional support.

*Study Design 2:* This study evaluated the impact of the BBBS program on academic achievement of at-risk youth. Participants in the treatment group were matched with a mentor after a stringent screening process; mentors and mentees met for two to four hours per week for a commitment of one year. Matches were supervised by case managers

through contacts with the parent, youth, and mentor. Training was provided to all volunteers and families.

*Sample 2:* Treatment youth in this quasi-experimental design study were boys recruited from agency events, while control participants consisted of boys who had been accepted into the BBBS program but were waiting to be assigned a mentor (average length of time on list was 15 months). The original study contained 17 participants in each group. At post-test, 12 treatment youth and 13 control youth remained. Average age of treatment youth was 11.9, while the average age of control youth was 10.4. The sample was predominantly Caucasian, with African American and Hispanic youth also represented. All study participants had the risk factor of being from a single parent home, and at least one additional risk factor in order to be eligible to participate. Other risk factors included family, school, peer, and substance use risk factors.

*Outcomes 2:* Analysis indicated that there was a significant impact of mentoring on composite scores on standardized tests for academic achievement. Adjusted mean scores in reading and math also indicated significant differences between the two groups, with no significant difference in spelling scores.

### **Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)**

*Program Type:* Academic Services; After School; Drug Prevention / Treatment; Leadership and Youth Development; Mentoring – Tutoring; Recreation - Leisure - Community Service; Skills Training

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* Community

*Program Goals:* Boys and Girls Clubs of America strives to help at-risk youth decrease problem behaviors by increasing their exposure to and involvement in prosocial activities and prosocial norms and values.

*Program Description:* The Boys and Girls Clubs of America are designed to help youth make healthy choices in their physical, educational, personal, social, emotional, vocational, and spiritual lives. The clubs provide the following basic resources to club members: (a) a safe haven away from the negative influences of the street; (b) guidance, discipline, and values from caring adult leaders; (c) constructive youth development activities and programs in supervised, supportive environments; (d) access to comprehensive, coordinated services that meet the complex needs of youth at risk; (e) educational support, increased awareness of career options, and guidance in setting goals; (f) a comprehensive violence prevention initiative; and (g) a vision of a safer, healthier, and more productive life.

There are five core program areas including Character and Leadership Development; Education and Career Development; Health and Life Skills; the Arts; and Sports, Fitness, and Recreation. The programs focus on developing social competence among youth

participants through alcohol, drug, and pregnancy prevention; career exploration; and delinquency and gang prevention. BGCA also seeks to promote positive youth development through less structured programs such as sporting events, recreation games, and health and fitness activities.

*Study Design:* This cross-sectional design examined the correlations between Club attendance, reasons for attendance, activities, academic achievement, and drug and alcohol use. One hundred and twenty youths were recruited for participation in the study at an urban Club located in a western community. An additional 30 youths were recruited at a local neighborhood apartment complex where many youth that attended the Club reside, in order to provide a comparison group of youths who frequented the Club less often. One hundred fifty youths returned the parent/guardian consent form during the two-week recruitment period. The final sample included 139 youths because youth who disclosed that they were not honest were dropped from the study. A 90-item questionnaire battery was administered to obtain information in five areas: participation in the Club, motivation for involvement, age, academic achievement and school engagement, and substance use.

*Sample:* The sample was 42% female and 58% male; participants ranged in age from 10 to 17 years, with a mean age of 12.02 years. The ethnic background of the sample was 46% Hispanic, 35% Caucasian, 7% African American, 5% Native American, and 7% other. Fifty four percent of the youths in the study resided in single-parent families.

*Outcomes:* According to the cross sectional study, overall monthly attendance at the Club was positively related to self-reported grades, enjoyment of school, and effort in school. Club participation was negatively related to favorable attitudes toward cheating and cigarette use. Participation was significantly related to truancy, favorable attitudes toward cheating, enjoyment in school, and effort in school. Statistically significant relationships favored youth with higher levels of participation in Club activities. Participation was significantly related to 30-day cigarette use. Again, statistically significant relationships favored youth with higher levels of participation in Club activities.

## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS**

### **Girl Power!**

*Program Type:* Community, Other Approaches; School - Environmental Strategies; Skills Training

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* Community; School

*Program Goals:* The goals of this program are to reduce the incidence of substance abuse and related risk factors while increasing the resiliency skills of girls; to infuse science-based substance abuse prevention practices in organizations serving youth; and to increase public information and awareness about proven substance abuse prevention

programs. The program also aims to increase school bonding and achievement through school-based activities and active partnerships with the schools. Evidence of effectiveness is demonstrated by improved grade point averages; reduced negative school behavioral incidents; and improved school attendance of program participants.

*Program Description:* The Girl Power! program was created by the United States Department of Health and Human Services as a public education campaign promoting healthy life choices for adolescent girls. The program includes prevention efforts and activities at the individual, community, and policy levels. Activities implemented to meet the program goals and objectives include the following: weekly 90 minute Girl Power! groups that focus on education and problem-solving skill development and meet over a 32-week period; alternative activities and community service projects that provide meaningful opportunities for girls and promote confidence and community pride; weekly activities and interaction with peers and healthy adult relationships; and school-based activities or other activities that increase school bonding and success.

*Study Design:* The study was a pre-posttest design, which included middle school and late elementary school girls, ages 10-15.

*Sample:* No description of the sample was provided; however, the program targets middle school and late elementary school girls, ages 10-15.

*Outcomes:* The results of the 1998-2000 school year revealed that 62% of Girl Power! participants had an increase in grades; 70% had an improvement in attendance; and 73% of these students had no record of disciplinary behavior in the school during this academic year. The results of the 2001-2002 school year revealed that 63% of participants (only 53% of the total sample was measured) had an increase in grade point average after the first nine weeks in the program; 86% improved or remained stable in the area of school bonding, as measured by respect for school property and on school report cards; and 81% demonstrated improvement in the area of self-control.

## **LA's BEST**

*Program Type:* Academic Services; After School; Recreation - Leisure - Community Service; School - Individual Strategies; Skills Training  
*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary  
*Setting:* Community; School

*Program Goals:* LA's BEST is a comprehensive, community-based intervention that seeks to foster a safe environment in which interpersonal skills and self-esteem can be developed. It attempts to integrate the educational support structure to enhance children's opportunities and supplement and enrich regular educational programming with new educational and recreational activities.

*Program Description:* This community-based, after school intervention program offers assistance with homework, library activities, interpersonal skills and self-esteem

development, and fields trips emphasizing the performance arts, in addition to recreational activities. Students enroll and are expected to participate on a regular basis.

*Study Design:* This program has been evaluated using a non-random, longitudinal design, beginning in the 1993-1994 school year. Second through fifth grade students enrolled in the program and were tracked through the 1997-1998 school year. Absences and English proficiency were measured by school-reported data. Achievement test scores on either the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) or the Stanford-9 Achievement Test (SAT-9) were used to generate reading, math, and language arts abilities.

*Sample:* A total of 4,312 students received the intervention, while 15,010 children were in qualifying schools but did not participate. This latter group served as a comparison group for certain evaluations. In the intervention group, 50.7% were female, 73.7% were Hispanic, and 58.6% were considered Limited English Proficient. In the non-intervention group, 66.9% of the students were designated as Limited English Proficient.

*Outcomes:*

Pretest - Posttest Results: For students with at least four years of program involvement, and controlling for gender, ethnicity, income and language status, higher participation was significantly related to higher math, reading, and language arts achievement scores and significantly related to better school attendance. Path analysis results indicate that higher participation led to higher school attendance and, in turn, led to the higher levels of academic achievement.

Treatment versus Comparison Group: Treatment students in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade cohort, the only cohort analyzed for this measure, made significantly better improvements in language redesignation (Limited English Proficient to English Proficient) than comparison students at posttest and again in grades 6 and 8. There were no differences found on this measure in grades 5 and 7. Treatment students in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade cohort had significantly fewer absences than comparison students in grades 6 and 7, though these differences disappeared in grades 8 and 9. Finally, in the first year, treatment students had significantly lower math achievement scores than comparison students, but these differences no longer existed by the 1997-1998 school year.

### **Student Transition and Recovery Program (STAR)**

*Program Type:* Academic Services; Community Supervision and Aftercare; Diversion; Juvenile Justice, Other; Mentoring - Tutoring

*Age:* Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle - Junior

*Setting:* Community; School

*Program Goals:* STAR aims to reduce bullying, suspension, expulsion and juvenile anti-social behavior by combining military-style drilling and exercise with academic tutoring.

*Program Description:* STAR is comprised of three levels of intervention for middle school students at risk of being suspended from school or placed in a juvenile detention

facility. STAR I is a one-day intervention for students referred by the school system. The one-day program involves rigorous military exercise and training. This level is meant as an "attention-getting" program for students who are at-risk for escalating problem behaviors. STAR II is a 30-day program for students referred by the school system for consistent problem behaviors that would usually warrant suspension. Students spend five hours a day at the STAR facility before and after school. Students participate in a military style "boot camp" every morning before school, and wear uniforms and military hairstyles. Students receive two hours of academic tutoring and conflict resolution instruction per day as well as attend weekly student group counseling. Parents must attend a weekly parent support/skills group. STAR III is a 24 week program, similar to STAR II, for students who are referred by the court system and is proscribed in lieu of juvenile detention placement. During the first phase, students participate in STAR II activities. Successful completion of Phase I -- including passing all subjects and no program violations -- allows the student to move into the second phase in which students no longer attend the morning military drilling, do not wear uniforms and parent/student counseling groups become optional. In Phase III of this program, students report to the STAR facility only one time per week and schools must submit weekly progress reports.

*Study Design:* Anonymous, voluntary parent and youth surveys were collected and compiled, in addition to standard year-end school-generated reports on attendance, grade point averages, and disciplinary referrals from ten program sites in Georgia.

*Sample:* The youth in this sample were middle school students in Georgia at risk of suspension, expulsion, or detention in a juvenile facility. No additional demographic information was provided.

*Outcomes:* On surveys, 79% of students and 75% of parents felt that STAR helped improve grades. The second most significant change cited by 67% of students and 65% of parents was improved relations with family members.

Absenteeism and suspension/expulsion rates for three years of STAR implementation in eight Georgia sites showed fluctuating patterns. The percentage of students absent 10 or more days declined in the first year (1996-97) of STAR implementation from 23% to 12%; this indicator increased to 19% the following year and remained at that level for 1998-99. The suspension/expulsion rate also exhibited an erratic pattern; the rate declined for two years from 32% to 11%, then increased to 14%.

All schools reported a marked decline in absenteeism and an increase in grade point averages.

## **PROGRAMS IN OTHER SETTINGS**

### **Police Led Truancy Intervention**

*Program Type:* Police Crime Prevention; School - Individual Strategies

*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* Juvenile Justice Setting; School; Social Services

*Program Goals:* Police Led Truancy Intervention aims to improve subsequent school attendance and reduce subsequent delinquency of youth processed through the Truancy Unit.

*Program Description:* The Police Led Truancy Intervention program is a truancy and delinquency prevention program using law enforcement and a community-based truancy unit to deter youth from skipping school. Sheriff's deputies or other law enforcement officers patrol communities looking for youth not accompanied by an adult during school hours and confirm that these youth have not been granted an excused absence from school. After verifying that the legal criteria are met for admission to the Truancy Unit, officers escort the truant youth to the Unit where they are processed, assessed, interviewed by staff, and informed of a forced silence requirement during their stay. Informal counseling with clinical staff is provided on an as-needed basis during intake. Unit rules are explained to all youth, as are the disciplinary actions in place for those who break the rules. Youth may stay at the facility for a maximum of six hours, at which time they must be released to a parent, guardian, or competent adult willing to sign for their release.

*Study Design:* The Police Led Truancy Intervention was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design that compared students processed in the truancy unit to those stopped by an officer but not processed in order to gauge its impact on two sets of intended outcomes--reductions in unexcused absences from school and subsequent delinquency among school aged youth. To assess this impact, three attendance variables were used: (a) a simple dichotomous measure based on whether the youth returned to school the day after processing at the Truancy Unit (processed youth) or being stopped by an officer (nonprocessed youth), (b) a comparison of the total number of unexcused absences 30 days before and after the encounter, and (c) the total number of days missed for the remainder of the school year following the intervention. Delinquent involvement was measured by referrals to the Department of Juvenile Justice, the agency responsible for most juvenile justice services.

*Sample:* During the 1999-2000 academic year, 12,330 youth were stopped by police on suspicion of truancy; of these youth, 7,395 were processed through the Truancy Unit and the remaining 4,935 were released after questioning. The sample of processed youth was 64% male, 39% Caucasian, 53% African American, 7% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. The sample of nonprocessed youth was 72% male, 28% Caucasian, 65% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. The distributions for age and grade were almost identical for both samples.

*Outcomes:* Among youth processed at the truancy unit, 71% returned to school the next day, while 63% of the nonprocessed youth returned to school the next day. Thirty days after a police encounter, 26% of nonprocessed youth had perfect school attendance,

compared to only 9% of processed youth. For the remainder of the school year, only 5% of processed youth had perfect attendance after the intervention compared to 21% of nonprocessed youth after being stopped and questioned by an officer. In the processed group, 43% missed fewer days of school after the intervention than before, compared to 28% of the nonprocessed youth. It should be noted, however, that 48% of both groups had more absences in the 30 days after the intervention than before. Finally, among those students who had been truant for 31 days or more, the mean number of days absent measured over the entire school year after the intervention for processed youth was 21 days with a standard deviation of 19 days, while the mean number of days absent for the nonprocessed youth was only 11 days with a standard deviation of 13 days, a significant difference. In summary, at the bivariate level, it appears that processed youth had some good short-term results, with more returning to school the next day and missing fewer school days 30 days after processing. But the program had a negative impact on long-term attendance, with the non-processed students missing fewer days over the entire year and more likely to have perfect attendance.

Using multivariate analyses, with other variables held constant (processed/nonprocessed, prior involvement in the juvenile justice system/no involvement, prior attendance, age, race, and gender), processed students were significantly more likely to have improved attendance at the 30-day interval than were nonprocessed students. The only other significant finding indicated that males were more likely to have improved attendance during the 30-day follow-up than were females. Unfortunately, the long-term data collected on attendance for the remainder of the school year indicated that processed youth missed significantly more days than nonprocessed youth. In addition, students who had delinquency records were more likely to miss more school days throughout the year after their police encounter (either processed or stopped by police) than were students without delinquency records. Finally, the impact of prior attendance is also relatively strong and statistically significant: the greater the number of days absent prior to the intervention, the greater the number of days absent after the intervention.

There were no significant differences between either the processed or nonprocessed students on measures of delinquency after an encounter with an officer, even among students with a prior record of delinquency. No significant results were found for the delinquency outcomes with either processed or nonprocessed students when all other variables were controlled for.

### **Wraparound Services Model – Columbus, Ohio**

*Program Type:* Counseling and Social Work; Employment – Vocational; Family Therapy; Juvenile Justice, Other; School - Environmental Strategies  
*Age:* Late Childhood (6-11) – Elementary; Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle – Junior; Late Adolescence (15-18) - High School

*Setting:* Community; Hospital / Medical Center; Mental Health / Treatment Center; School

*Program Goals:* The goal of the wraparound services program is to support normalized and inclusive options for youth with complex needs and their families. The behavioral goal is that the juvenile participants who receive the wraparound services will have fewer subsequent arrests, fewer school absences, not be expelled or suspended, not run away from home, not be picked up by the police, and not be assaultive.

*Program Description:* The wraparound services approach is a comprehensive model that joins the efforts of significant individuals in the youth's life with the community. These efforts are joined to identify and build on the strengths of the youth and family, while encouraging behaviors that would reduce the likelihood of further involvement with the juvenile justice system. The wraparound services approach was built on two major beliefs; (a) that families need to be involved in helping their family member and (b) that maintaining community living is paramount. Effective treatments address the multiple determinants of delinquent behavior and provide broad-level, complex, community-based interventions. In the wraparound services program, problem areas are divided into eight life domains including Home/Living Arrangement, Family/Surrogate Family, Psychological/Emotional, Educational/Vocational, Legal, Social, Safety, and Medical.

*Study Design:* This study used a pre-post test control group design with random assignment to treatment conditions. Program participants were tracked and contacted following program entry. The program offered a follow-up for subsequent juvenile court contacts and subsequent at-risk and delinquent behavior. Research staff workers conducted follow-up interviews every other month for 18 months, or 9 times, over the course of the investigation. The study included only participants that met the project criteria: under 17 years of age, referred for charges filed against them for unruly or delinquent behavior (misdemeanant or felony levels 3 and 4), those in the pre-sentence stage who had been adjudicated unruly or delinquent (misdemeanant or felony levels 3 and 4), and those entering the children's services intake division for delinquency or unruly behavior, but not for neglect or dependency cases. Initially, 500 youth were invited to participate in the study; 307 youth agreed to participate and entered the program. Of the 307 participants, 166 were excluded from the study due to loss of contact, moving, or inadequate implementation of services. Of the remaining 141 participants, 73 were randomly assigned to receive wraparound services and 68 to receive conventional services.

*Sample:* One hundred and forty one juveniles who entered the juvenile justice center in Franklin County, South Carolina, participated in the investigation. Participants included 54 females and 87 males. The participants' ethnicity was 50% Caucasian, 49% African American, and 1% biracial. The participants' mean age was reported as 14.85 years; however, all juvenile participants had to be under the age of 17 to qualify.

*Outcomes:* Participants in the wraparound program participants had fewer unexcused school absences, were expelled or suspended from school less, ran away from home less, were picked up by police less, and were less assaultive than control youth. There were no significant differences found between the two groups with regard to arrests or incarceration during program involvement. The study did find support for the hypothesis

that those involved in wraparound services would engage in less at-risk and delinquent behavior. However, it failed to provide empirical support for the hypothesis that youth who received wraparound services would have fewer subsequent criminal offenses at 6, 12, or 18 months than youth who received conventional services.

## Conclusions

Studies on all 18 programs included findings regarding attendance, while studies on 12 of the programs included information on academic achievement. Nearly all of the programs demonstrated increased attendance and academic achievement, indicating that a range of strategies in various settings can be effective in bolstering student participation and performance. However, two programs, the Chronic Truancy Initiative (school based program) and the Police Led Truancy Intervention (program in other setting), demonstrated initial increases in attendance with long term decreases following police intervention.

In addition, of the 18 programs reviewed, 8 received positive rankings by at least one of the following agencies:

- United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)
- United States Department of Education (DOE)
- National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Blueprints for Violence Prevention (OJJDP Blueprints)
- United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Title V Community Prevention Grants Program (OJJDP Title V)

The following table displays the 8 favorably reviewed programs:

Program	CSAP	DOE	NIDA	OJJDP Blueprints	OJJDP Title V
<b>Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (formerly Preventive Intervention)</b>	Promising			Promising	
<b>Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA)</b>	Effective			Model	Exemplary
<b>Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)</b>					Effective
<b>Career Academy</b>					Effective
<b>Chronic Truancy Initiative</b>					Promising

<b>Positive Action through Holistic Education (Project PATHE)</b>				Promising	Promising
<b>School Transitional Environment Program (STEP)</b>				Promising	Effective
<b>Truant Recovery Program</b>					Promising

Six of the 8 favorably reviewed programs were considered school based programs, while the other two were considered community based programs. No programs in either the “School and community based programs” category or in the “Programs in other settings” category were noted by the aforementioned organizations. The following table demonstrates the 8 favorably ranked programs by setting category:

<b>School Based Programs</b>	<b>Community Based Programs</b>
Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (formerly Preventive Intervention)	Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA)
Career Academy	Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)
Chronic Truancy Initiative	
Positive Action through Holistic Education (Project PATHE)	
School Transitional Environment Program (STEP)	
Truant Recovery Program	

### **Implications**

A variety of program types and settings can be effective in increasing student attendance and academic achievement. Programs that include police intervention may have long term negative effects on student attendance. Program developers may benefit from analyzing and replicating elements of programs that have achieved national recognition, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) is an initiative of The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (CFFC). NCSE strives to build a network of key stakeholders who share the belief that improving school attendance and school attachment promotes achievement and school success.



National Center for School Engagement

NCSE was established as a result of more than a decade of educational research about youth out of the educational mainstream conducted by CFFC. The impact of this work has been the development of significant investments of state funds to reduce suspensions expulsions and truancy. Over five years ago, CFFC began working with the OJJDP, US Department of Justice to assist in the planning and implementation of pilot demonstration projects across the country. As projects developed, CFFC became the national evaluator of this five-year truancy demonstration project.

The culmination of ten years of program experience and research has identified truancy and school engagement as the centerpiece of NCSE's work to improve outcomes for youth who are at the greatest risk of school failure and delinquency. We are national leaders in applying research to help communities prevent and reduce truancy.

Author:  
Hilary Burg

National Center for School Engagement  
c/o Colorado Foundation for Families and Children  
303 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 400  
Denver, CO 80203  
(303) 837-8466  
[www.schoolengagement.org](http://www.schoolengagement.org)