

# REDUCING TRUANCY: BEST POLICY & PRACTICE

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## TRUANCY RATES

- Quantifying national prevalence of truancy is difficult
- Lack of uniform definition of truancy
  - Define unexcused absence
  - Define chronic truancy
- Inconsistent tracking
  - Documentation protocol

## TRUANCY RATES

- National survey of adolescents self-reported skipping 1+ day(s)/30 days
  - 8th grade 11%; 10th grade 16%; 12th grade 35%
- Denver: 3rd grade 11%; 10th grade 23%; 12th grade 35% chronically truant (10 or more unexcused absences/year)
- Florida: elementary school 7%; middle school 11%; high school 15% chronically absent (21 or more days absent/year)
- Wisconsin: elementary school 32%; middle school 46%; high school 74% habitually truant (5 or more days unexcused absent/semester)
- California: 25% students truant (3+ unexcused absences or tardies/year)

## CAUSES OF TRUANCY

- Victims of bullying, mental health problems, poor relationship with other students
- Delinquent attitudes, association with delinquent peers, gang membership
- Lack of family attachment, family conflict, homelessness, transportation
- Disengagement from school
- Lack of academic success in school
- Poor student-teacher relations
- Ineffective attendance policies

## CONSEQUENCES OF TRUANCY

- Poor academic performance
- School dropout
- Delinquency
- Teenage pregnancy
- Substance abuse

## PREVENTING TRUANCY

- Three "A's": Attendance, Attachment, Achievement
- Attendance
  - Clear expectations, monitor/reward attendance, community outreach, policies that promote attendance
- Achievement
  - High expectations, relevant/culturally competent curriculum, flexible instruction, multi-measures of success (not only college)
- Attachment
  - Positive relations, safe environments, welcoming school climates, school-based supports (out-of-school time programs, family support programs, mentoring, arts, music, sports)

## REDUCING TRUANCY

- Eliminate out-of-school suspensions for truancy
- Remove attendance as factors in grading
- Focus policies on learning & earning credits (partial)
- Offer specialized classes for students who have fallen behind & need to catch up (weekend, evening)
- Eliminate “push-out policies” that withhold learning opportunities from truant students
- Make start times later for secondary schools

## REDUCING TRUANCY

- Partner with community groups
  - Law enforcement, juvenile courts, local government, local businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, community centers, public libraries & recreation centers
- Offer continuum of rewards & negative consequences
- Immediate action & engagement with students & parents
- Provide opportunities for parents to be active in children’s education
  - Avoid the blame game (parents v schools); share successes & problems

# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

- Positive Action: Model (Blueprints Ranking)
- MSU Adolescent Diversion Project Effective
- Achievement Mentoring: Promising
- Career Academies: Promising
- STEP School Transitional Environment Program: Promising
- Big Brothers Big Sisters: Promising
- Eisenhower Quantum Opportunities: Promising

