

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program (CTIP)

Ft. Worth Independent School District

Ft. Worth, TX

Barry Smith, Assistant Director of the Department of Student Engagement and School Completion.

2901 Shotts St., 2nd Floor

Ft. Worth, TX 76107

Barry.Smith@fwisd.org

817-815-2900 Fax 817-815-2905

Key words: Truancy, attendance court

Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program (CTIP)

Funding Sources

From its inception through 2015, the cost of the program was shared; approximately 52% of the funds were a departmental budget item, and 48% was funded by the City of Ft Worth. As of the 2015-2016 school year, the district assumed 100% of the cost of the program.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative.

Established in 2000, CTIP created the first dedicated attendance court in the State of Texas with the sole purpose of serving Fort Worth ISD students and families. The initial partnership included Fort Worth ISD, City of Fort Worth, Tarrant County District Attorney's Office, and Tarrant County Juvenile Probation Department. The current inter-local agreement is between the City of Fort Worth and Fort Worth ISD. In addition, the Stay in School Coordinator/Specialist III positions were created as attendance officers, to address the needs of students and families at the community level.

Scope and Setting

CTIP began as a pilot program January 18, 2000, and has since evolved into the preferred truancy model. The program was designed to be a collaborative effort between the Fort Worth Independent School District, City of Fort Worth Municipal Courts, Fort Worth Police Department, Tarrant County Juvenile Services, and various mental health and social service providers based in our community. One of the significant components of the program has been the School Attendance Court, which has the ability to exclusively hear truancy cases in a timely and relevant manner. CTIP and its staff have received much recognition locally and nationally, including the Tarrant County Black Bar Association's "Legal Specialization Award" for Judiciaries work in the Truancy Court; the Clifford Davis Award from the Black Women Lawyer's Association; yearly recognition of the Dansby Tower Award to the most improved students at the Tarrant County Commissioner's Court, The City of Ft Worth City Council Meeting, and the FWISD's School Board; and most notably, the "Magna Award" from the National School Board Association.

Three Components:

- Stay-in-School Coordinators (Truancy Officers)
- Court Coordinators
- FWISD's Student Attendance Court

Staffing Pattern

- Each of the 13 Stay-In-School Coordinators (SISC) and a Specialist III are assigned to a pyramid (high school and its feeders campuses) which is geographically located.
- Reports to the Assistant Director of Student Engagement and School Completion.

Stay-In-School Coordinators responsibilities:

- Increasing student attendance
- Dropout prevention and recovery
- Conducting leaver investigations
- Completing student support plans
- Monitoring the progress of identified "high-risk" families
- Compiling evidence for court action from the schools within their assigned pyramid
- Working a flexible schedule

Court Coordinator:

- Serve as liaison between City of Fort Worth, CTIP Office, and Fort Worth ISD schools
- Collaborate with community resources
- Collect and maintain school truancy data
- Represent Fort Worth ISD during court hearings
- Advise City of Fort Worth representative of district policies and procedures and available resources
- Attend community forums
- Report court dispositions to district
- The FWISD staff reports to the Assistant Director of Student Engagement and School Completion
- Each of the 13 Stay-In-School Coordinators (SISC) and a Specialist III are assigned to a pyramid (high school and its feeders campuses) which is geographically located.
- One Fort Worth ISD Court Coordinator works directly in the Truancy Court.

In addition, the City of Ft. Worth provides,

- Municipal Court Judge
- Three City of Fort Worth Support Staff:
 - Administrative Assistant
 - Case Manager
 - Court Clerk
 - Deputy Marshals (3)
- Truancy Court Prosecutors
- Defense Attorneys

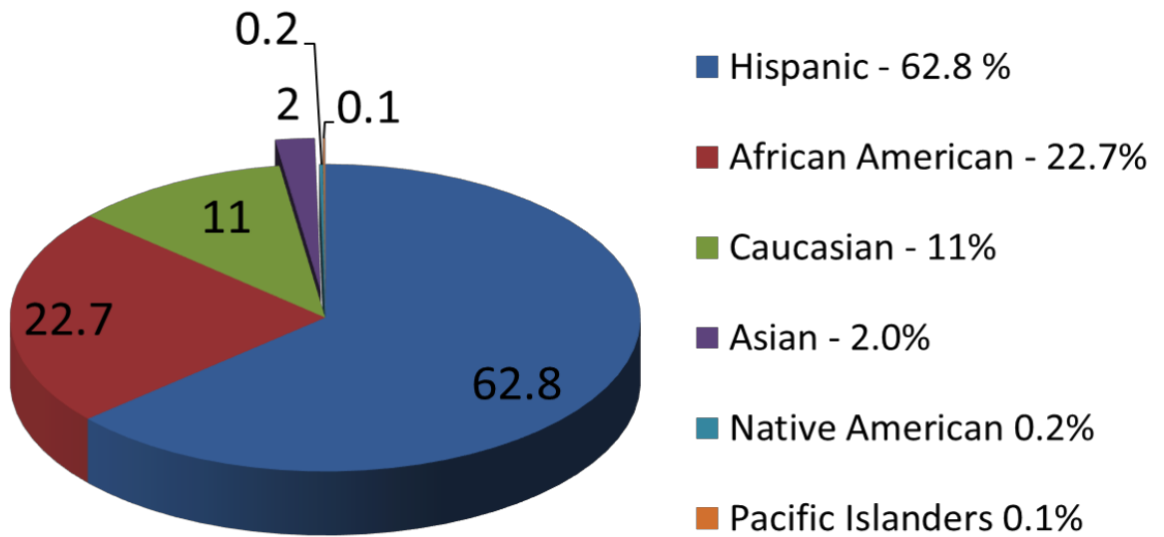
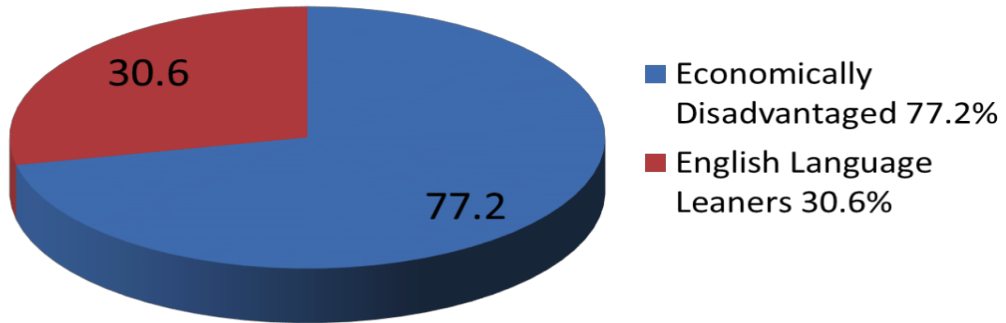
Population Served

FWISD's Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program (CTIP) endeavors to address the issues of truancy within the City of Ft Worth. CTIP is an organized effort to reduce the number of students who are truant from or who drop out of school. The program emphasizes early intervention, prevention and wrap around services with students and parents. Our program has the potential to impact each and every student within the district and works with all campuses at all grade levels. Our target students are every enrolled student from Pre-K thru graduation.

Fort Worth ISD has a student enrollment of approximately 87,000 students, which consist of the following campuses:

- 18 high schools,
- 29 middle and sixth-grade campuses,
- 83 elementary schools, and
- 16 specialized campuses.

The following charts describe the demographics of FWISD students.



Project Origination

The CTIP program has been a collaborative effort between FWISD, The Tarrant County District Attorney's Office, The City of Ft Worth, Tarrant County Juvenile Probation Department, and Lena Pope Home. The Truancy Court was established through an inter-local agreement in January 2001. As a component of the CTIP program, the court was the first dedicated school attendance court established in the State of Texas. During the 78th Legislative Session HB 2087 was ratified. This bill allowed the county judge (family court) within counties with a population of two million or more, to appoint one or more full-time magistrate to exclusively handle truancy cases.

During the 2015-16 school year, due to legislative changes and the effectiveness of early intervention, the volume of court referrals was reduced dramatically. Truancy cases are now being held two days per week at the municipal court. The truancy dockets continue to be referred exclusively to and are heard by a specialized judge, Judge Raquel Brown.

Issues Addressed

The goal of this program is to reduce the number of dropouts and truants. The greatest issue was and continues to be recognizing and accepting that students are truant and drop out for a multitude of reasons. Our objective is to identify these factors and address them as early as possible and to provide intervention through community and social services. The Truancy Court was designed as a "problem-solving" venue and not a punitive tool.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

The CTIP program is administered through the District's Department of Student Engagement and School Completion. The program was created with the overall objective to reduce the number of students who are truant from and ultimately drop out from school. The program provides progressive interventions that include home visits, campus level parent/student conferences, district level contract and other social service referrals and as a last resort, referrals to truancy court. Measurable goals are evaluated by the Average Daily Attendance (ADA), the Completion rate. The goal of the department was to increase the ADA by no less than 1% per campus each year or to exceed and maintain an overall ADA of 95% each for each secondary campus and 98% for each elementary campus.

The Targets Goals

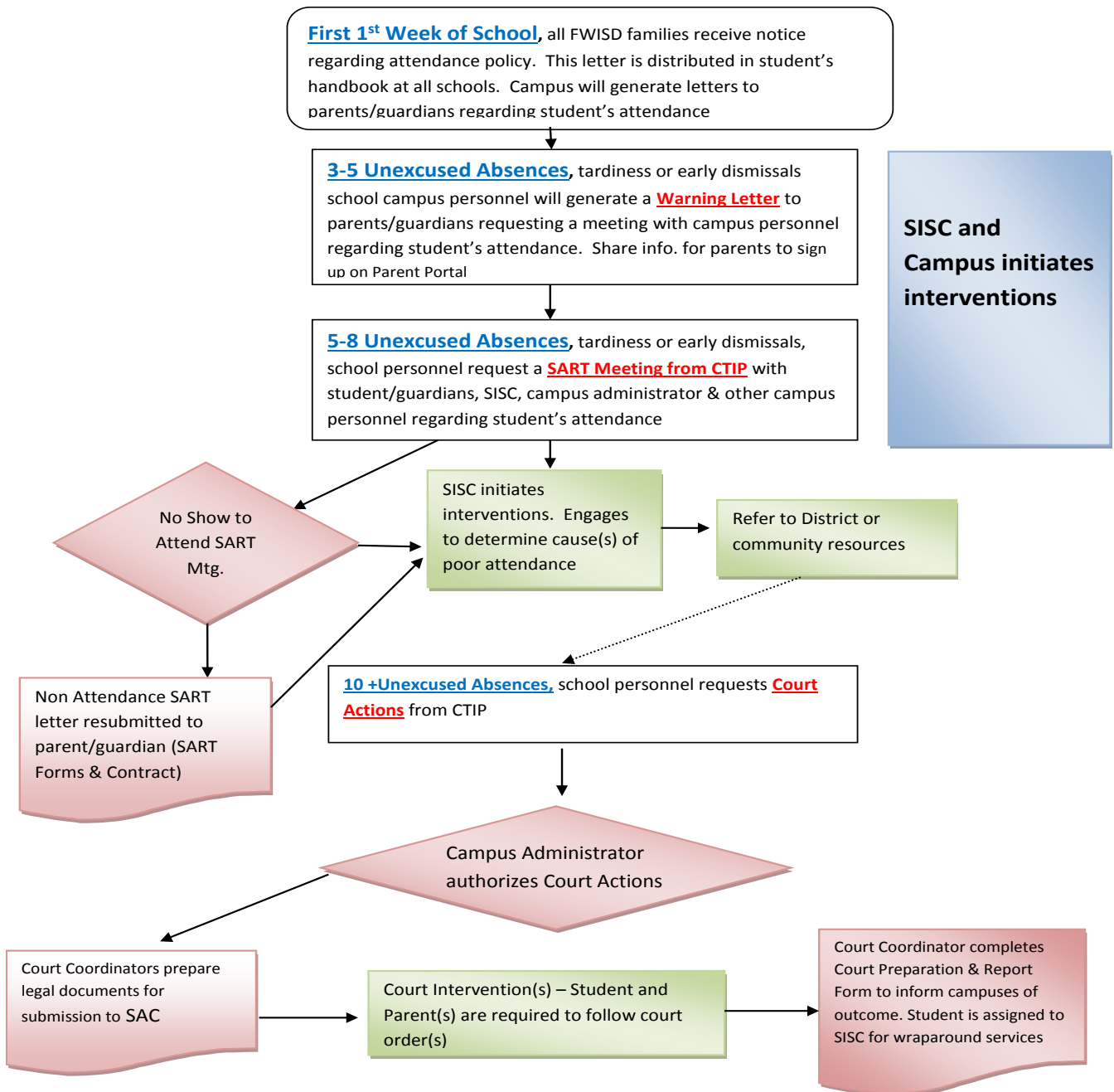
- 10% decrease in the number of court hearings
- 10% increase in warning letters
- 10% increase in Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meetings
- 10% increase in direct interventions

Anticipated Outcomes

- Overall increase in Average Daily Attendance
- Overall increase in the GRADUATION RATE
- Overall decrease in the dropout rate

Strategies and/or Interventions

The flow chart below illustrates the process in which students are referred to our program.



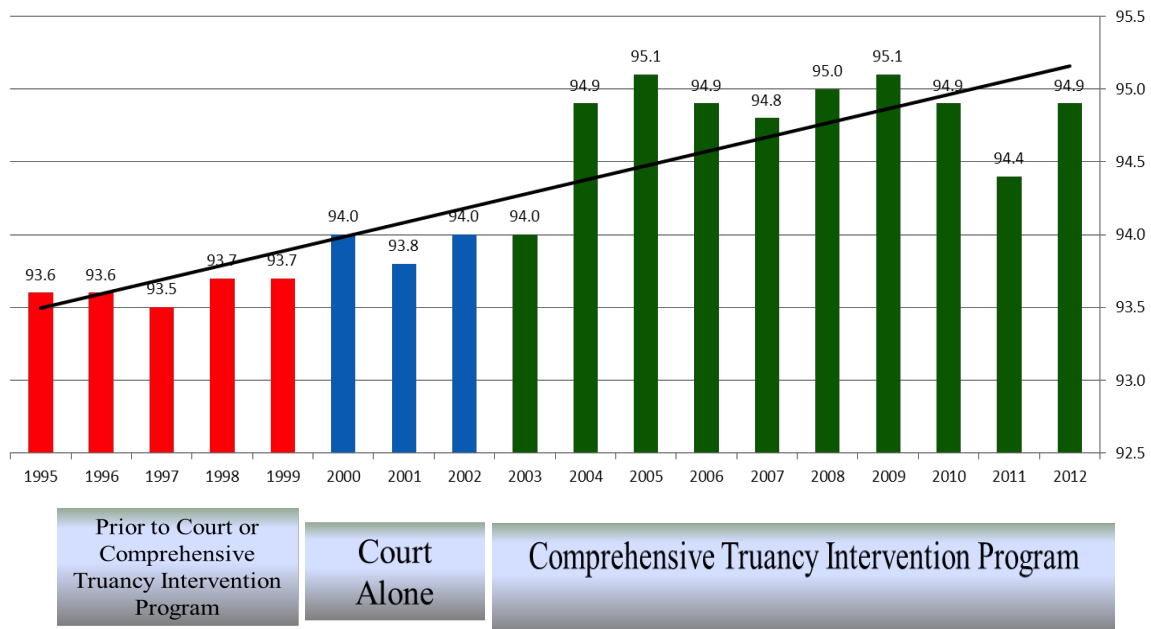
Project Timeline

Each year the program is reassessed for effectiveness. FWISD and The City of Fort Worth enters into a memorandum of understanding for each school year and fiscal year. CTIP has transformed from a pilot program into an intricate component of the school district.

Special Conditions and/or Expertise Required to Carry Out the Project

Success of the program relies upon a collaborative effort on the part of the students, parents, campus administrators, campus support staff, contracted providers, social service agencies, and community resources.

Outcomes and Achievements



Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates

- Ninety percent (90%) of the students filed on attended their court date (n = 686 students)
- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of students decreased their number of absences after attending a hearing
- Mean number of absences prior to court hearing was 10.4
- Mean number of post-hearing absences was 6.3
- Average increased attendance of 4.1 days per student (2,812 days)

Current Status of Project

During the 2016-17 school year, FWISD and the City of Fort Worth renewed their memorandum of understanding, thereby extending the program another year. Changes in the Texas Education Code have resulted in the changing of truancy offenses from criminal to civil. Due to the early intervention approach utilized by CTIP, very little adjustment has been needed.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

During the duration of the CTIP, I have had the privilege of working in every aspect of the program. I was originally brought into the program as a “Stay in School Coordinator” assigned to the Dunbar High School Pyramid. I worked with the Dunbar Pyramid which includes the high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools, and one alternative campus. I was promoted to a Court Coordinator position, where I represented the school district and made direct recommendations for services to the presiding judge. For the previous six years, I have been the Assistant Director of the Department of Student Engagement and School completion, where I provide direct supervision for the program. I have been involved in every aspect of the program.

Lessons Learned

Some of the key components that are necessary for the program to succeed are:

- campus and community relationships,
- continuity of services,
- dedicated Truancy Court,
- the county’s, district’s, and city’s commitment to the students and families, and
- collaborative efforts.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project?

Full commitment and cooperation from the campus level administration and the support of executive level staff is crucial for the success of the program.