

**One Love, One Heart  
Parent and Student Support Group**

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***Key words:*** Keeping Students and families connected to school.

**Funding Sources: General Fund from Shelby County Schools Office of SEED**

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

Materials/Supplies	3,500
Breakfast for Students and Parents	2,500
Miscellaneous	1,500
Celebration/Incentives	<u>2,500</u>
TOTAL	10,000

**Project Description:**

Studies have shown that when the parents aren't involved in their child's education they are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviors and are at risk of dropping out of school. One Love, One Heart is a student and parent support group keeping students and families connected to school and preventing them from being referred to Juvenile Court for violating the Compulsory Attendance Law. Research states that there are four causative risk factors that are linked to truancy: The Parent, School, Community and the Individual Student. The support groups will focus on these four areas. The groups will provide necessary soft skills that will be beneficial to their success in school and life, correct truant behavior, provide resources to assist the family with risk factors causing the truancy, improve parenting techniques and prevent students from dropping out of school.

The groups will provide opportunities for role play and journal writing. In addition, guest speakers will share information regarding behavior management, mental health, nutrition and health awareness, gang prevention, character education and community involvement.

**Staffing Pattern:**

- Eight speakers to facilitate support groups from the Department of Children Services, Project Coordinators from the Gang Department, Family Engagement Specialists, Mental Health Specialists, Juvenile Court Staff, Memphis Police Department, University of Tennessee, Local Business Owner and Ministers.
- One Classroom Teacher.
- 2 Attendance Teachers from Shelby County School District.

**Population Served:**

Students that have accumulated fifteen days of unexcused absences and have not met the goals from tier one and two of the truancy process. The parent of the truant child is required to attend the support groups.

**Project Origination:**

Shelby County Schools is committed to improving the recidivism rate of students identified as truant. Research shows that truancy is generally considered a major risk factor for dropping out of school and delinquent behavior including substance abuse, teen pregnancy, illiteracy, gang involvement and criminal activity. Our strategy is to utilize resources within the school, collaborate with families, social service agencies, churches and the community to keep students and parents connected to school. The goal is to provide students and parents a positive insight on education and life so that they will become productive individuals. The Parent Support Group came as a result to provide interventions that would deter parents from being referred to Juvenile Court for violating the Compulsory Attendance Law. The following agencies: Department of

Human Services, Department of Children Services, Shelby County Schools Department of Truancy and Shelby County Juvenile Court decided after much discussion that parents needed additional interventions before they are referred to Juvenile Court.

**Issues Addressed:**

The primary issues addressed are student attendance and ensuring students and parents are knowledgeable of the resources that are available to them which promote success in school and life.

**Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:**

- Increase awareness of the importance of regular school attendance and its long-term effects
- Increased awareness of resources that are available to assist families in overcoming obstacles to improve attendance
- 90% of students will improve attendance

**Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:**

Saturday Support Groups will be implemented to provide students and parents with information focusing on services and organizations that assist with issues that are preventing students from attending school. In addition, guest speakers will conduct informational sessions on the following topics: “How do I Become Involved in my Child’s Education”, Signs to Look for (Gang Activity), Mental Health, Goal Setting, Actions Have Consequences, You Are Your Child’s Advocate, Respect Rules, You The Adult You Are in Charge, Nutrition, Health and Body.

**Results (Outcomes and Achievements):**

Ultimately, as a result of attending the Saturday Support Group, it is the hope that parents will become more involved with their child’s education. There have been four Parent Support Groups conducted to date. Participation from parents and students has proven successful. They have enjoyed the engagement with facilitators and with each other sharing thoughts, ideas and issues surrounding the reasons that have caused the truancy. Attendance for the support groups average around 20 participants per session. We prefer the groups to be no more than 20 to keep the setting more intimate. There is no data at this time to support improvement in the attendance rates of the students participating in the sessions.

**Project Timeline:**

The first session was held on Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The topics discussed were “How do I Become Involved in my Child’s Education” and “Signs to Look for (Gang Activity).” The purpose of the sessions was to empower the parents as well as the students so they will become motivated to improve their attendance. Hopefully, the parent will use the information from the support groups to help other parents.

**Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:**

The expertise required to carry out this project requires knowledge of what causes truancy and how to provide resources to the parents and students in order to overcome the obstacles that have caused the truancy.

**Current Status of Project:**

This project is on-going

**Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:**

I oversee the planning, secure the location of the groups, collaborate with the facilitators and follow-up on the student's attendance. It is my role to meet with students and parents to see if they have utilized any of the resources and soft skills presented in the support groups. I am also responsible for monitoring the students' academic success and school attendance.

**Lessons Learned:**

I have learned that, at times, some parents feel that the school is not responsive to their child's needs. Parents want the best for their children but don't always know the best way to achieve that goal and where to go for assistance.

**Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:**

Support groups empower parents and students. They expose families to resources that can promote the benefits of school attendance and academic success in school and in life. This project requires much planning, collaboration, after school hours and weekend group sessions. You have to be organized, dedicated and passionate about the work. It is very rewarding to see the impact these support groups have on the students and parents.