

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

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Key words: 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 about 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 2nd. 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:

My role was to plan and to select students and parents for the sessions. I work with developing processes to monitor and evaluate the progress of the program. Finding new resources to assist our families with their various issues was ongoing. I was also responsible for monitoring the students' academic and school attendance.

Lessons Learned:

Parents are not always knowledgeable of the importance of them being involved in their child's education. These sessions have given them hope that there are various agencies to assist them with attendance as well with other issues.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Find the underlying causes that prevent students from attending school daily. Provide sessions that will give the parents the skills to become an advocate for their child and for the students to become empowered to state what is preventing them from attending school and where they can seek assistance when needed. Much planning, collaboration, and after school hours are essential for this project to be successful. Forming a relationship with the families is important. When they feel you are concerned, they will work hard to reach the goals that have been set for them.