

**Student Attendance Review Team (SART)
Behavior Improvement Plan of Action Model
Fort Worth Independent School District**

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***Key words:* Prevention, Intervention, Engagement**

Funding Sources:

Fort Worth Independent School District’s Student Engagement and School Completion Department funded by local and federal Title IV funds.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

The salaries and resources for the 14 Specialist IV, Stay-In-School Coordinators that serve as the district attendance officers, administrative and clerical support staff, Assistant Director and Director are included in the Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program department budget of approximately \$779,172.

Project Description:

The Student Attendance Review Team (SART) is a truancy prevention/intervention measure designed to address the underlining causes of a student’s truant conduct. During the meeting, an individualized Behavioral Improvement Plan is developed. This plan is a contract with the goal of implementing strategies to improve the student’s school attendance and prevent the student from dropping out. A Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting is generally requested for students that have accumulated 5-8 unexcused absences. The meeting is held at the student’s campus, requested by campus administrators and staff, and addresses the student attendance issues. The team involved in the process is the student, parent/guardian, and the school officials.

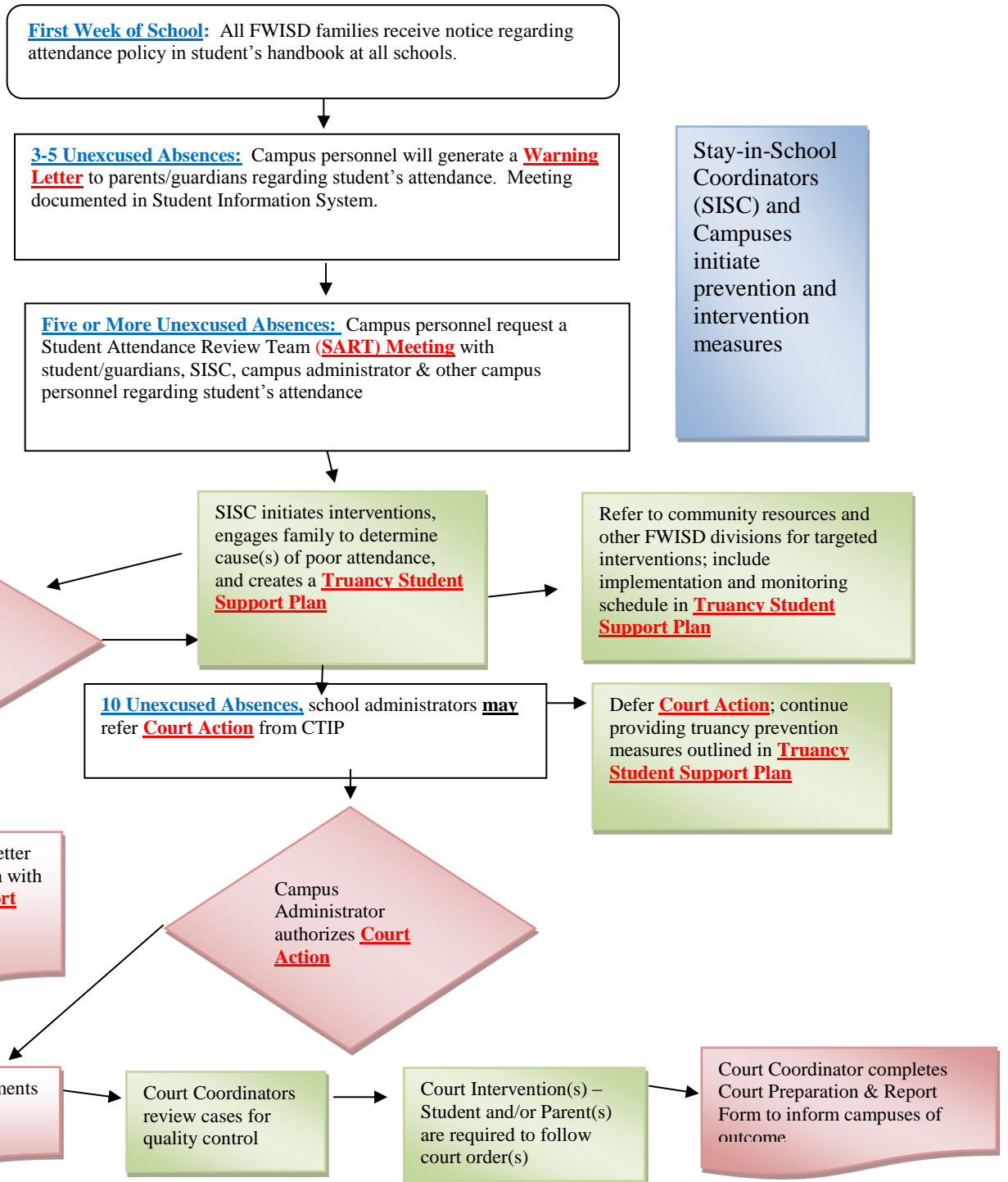
The request for this is meeting is processed through the Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program office. An invitation to attend the meeting is sent to the student’s home, notifying the parent/guardian and the student to attend a scheduled meeting at a certain time and date at the student’s assigned campus.

The meeting, facilitated by the Stay-In-School Coordinator, addresses the compulsory attendance laws mandated by the State of Texas. The meeting is to identify contributing factors to truant conduct. Families receive information about available District and social services; also, a written Behavior Improvement Plan of action (SART Agreement) is provided for parent, the student, and the school personnel, and will proactively address the student’s attendance. The Stay-In-School Coordinator, the student and parent/guardian sign the agreement. If the parent/guardian and student do not abide by the terms of the agreement, a referral to the truancy court is a potential consequence.

School personnel may request a SART meeting for a student and the parent/guardian at any time; however, the effectiveness of the SART meeting is dependent on early intervention.

Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program (CTIP)

FLOW CHART



TRUANCY COURT: ORDERS & ENFORCES COURT DISPOSITIONS TO INCLUDE INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS
 The Municipal Court Judge is duty-bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct and must perform his/her judicial duties so that the integrity, impartiality and independence of the judiciary are preserved. FWISD will not influence the judicial conduct or judgment of the appointed Judge.
 Municipal Court #8 is governed by the City of Fort Worth, any questions and /or complaints about dispositions should be referred to the City of Fort Worth Municipal Courts office at 817-392-6700.

The following attachments are used in the Student Attendance Review Team process:

Electronic Notification –E-mail/Letter (SART)

<<CURRENT DATE>>October 15, 2019

«PARENT GUARDIAN»

«ADDRESS»

Fort Worth, TX. «ZIP»

Dear Parent/Guardian of «STUDENTNAME»:

The Fort Worth Independent School District wants your child to succeed academically and in life and this can only be accomplished by your child attending school on a regular basis. Excessive unexcused absences, tardies, and early dismissals interrupt the instructional day and can lead to a child not reaching his or her potential. Your child's attendance is not at acceptable standards; therefore, steps are necessary to address their attendance. Fort Worth Independent School District is requesting that you attend a scheduled Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting to address this issue. The SART meeting will be held as follows:

FW School Campus - «NAMESCHOOL»

<<SCHOOL ADDRESS>>

Fort Worth, TX «ZIP»

«DATEOFMEETING» at «TIMEOFMEETING»

<<SCHOOL CONTACT NUMBER>>

According to Texas Education Code § 25.085 students who are 6 years old or older and 18 years of age or younger; or students who are younger than the age of 6 and enrolled in a prekindergarten or kindergarten; and students over the age of 18 who voluntarily enroll as a student within FWISD must attend school for the entire period the program of instruction is provided. Texas Family Code § 65.003 states that if a student misses 10 or more days or parts of days within a 6-month period without a valid excuse, the student is engaging in truant conduct. Action may be taken against the student if he/she is 12 years old or older and 18 years old or younger. Texas Education Code § 25.093 states that action may also be taken against the parent/guardian of a student who is 6 years old or older and 18 years old or younger, for failing to require their child to attend school as required by law. Penalties include fines up to \$500 per day or part of day a child is absent without excuse; or require performance of community service; and students may also lose the privilege to get a driver's license until the age of 19. Additionally, students who miss 10% of the days of instruction within a semester may be denied credit for that course.

The Meeting will be conducted at the campus where your student is currently enrolled. It is imperative that you attend this scheduled meeting with Fort Worth Independent School District Representative. ***If you believe that you have received this letter in error, please call the Attendance Office at the school where your child attends.***

In closing, it is our primary concern that your child receives an education. If a pattern of unexcused absences persists, your child's campus will be left with no other choice but to refer the case for prosecution.

Sincerely,

Stay in School Coordinator

Staffing Pattern:

There are 14 Specialist IV, Stay-In-School Coordinators (SISC) that serve as truancy officers in FWISD. The Stay-In-School Specialist serve all campuses within assigned pyramids (traditional high school/learning network, feeder schools and alternative schools) and is responsible for dropout prevention and recovery. The Specialist works closely with campus administrators, school counselors, instructional staff, and other Student Support Services personnel to address the needs of at-risk students; while also working directly with students and families in developing support plans to facilitate a successful path to graduation and to provide intervention measures. SART meetings held at campus includes the following:

Pre-Kindergarten – 5th Grade (*not required to attend)

- Administrator*
- School Counselor
- School Attendance Clerk
- Parent/Guardian

Stay-In-School Coordinator 6th Grade – 12th Grade (*not required to attend)

- Administrator*
- School Counselor*
- Intervention Specialist * (**Social Worker**)
- Parent/Guardian
- Student
- Stay-In-School Coordinator

At the middle and high school, the Stay-In-School Coordinator will meet with student regardless if parent attends the meeting to discuss attendance issues.

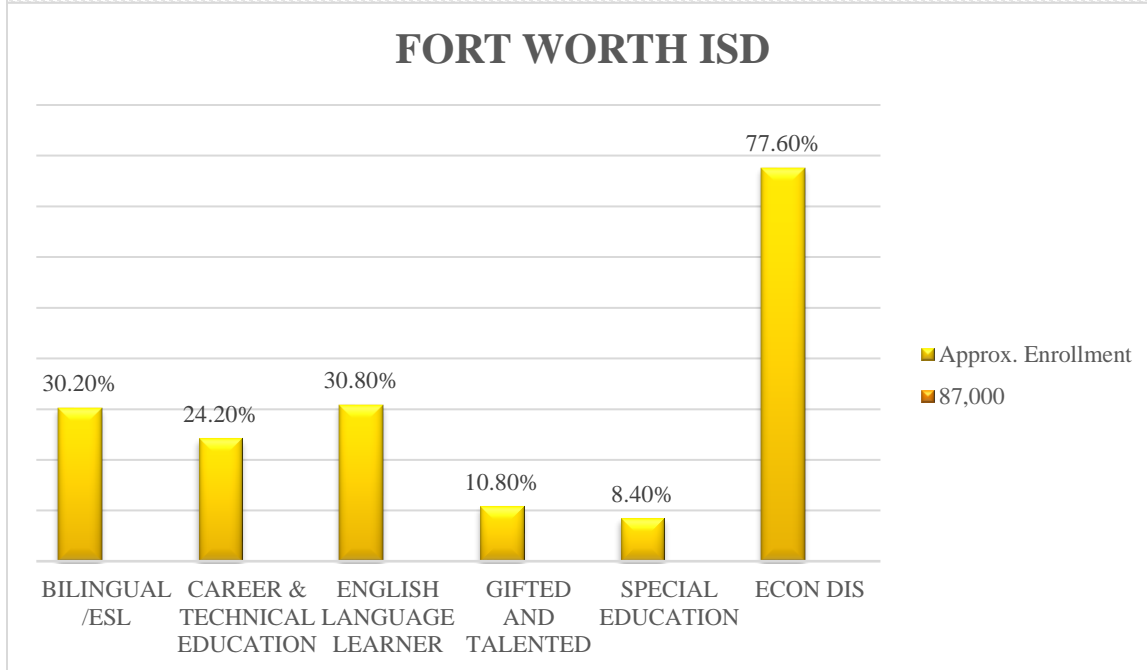
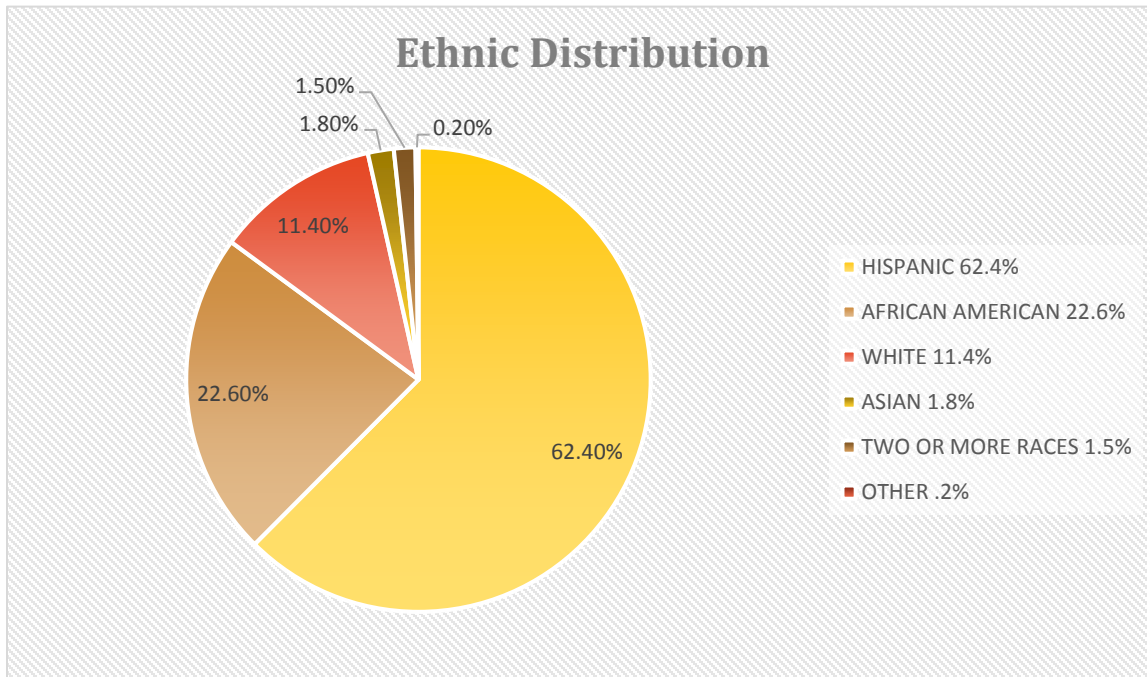
Population Served:

Fort Worth ISD has an enrollment of approximately 87,000 students. The Comprehensive Truancy Program provides services to families and students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

Fort Worth ISD campuses include:

- 82 elementary schools
- 29 middle schools
- 21 high schools and 16 other

The following charts describe the demographics of FWISD students.



Project Origination:

On January 18, 2000, FWISD School Board Member, Jean McClung initiated CTIP as a pilot program. Jean McClung along with Cecelia Spears, Assistant Superintendent, Safety & Security FWISD and Delena Doyle, Assistant Director, Attendance Control FWISD worked to create the SART agreement as a behavior improvement plan that includes a specific description of required or prohibited behavior. Before the program was in place, a judicial oversight of truancy cases was scattered among the peace courts. This approach produced inconsistent results and did little to address the underlying causes of truancy. CTIP was in full operation on April 24, 2001 and has since evolved into the current truancy initiative.

Issues Addressed:

The ultimate goal of a SART is to identify and implement a stable plan of action to address the student's truant conduct and make necessary interventions and referrals.

DOCUMENTATION ADDRESSED

- Student profile (check demographics)
- Attendance profile (check for patterns and possible errors)
- Student grades, progress reports, report cards, gradebook-current grades
- Transcript (high school)
- Comments from teachers/administrators
- Special Education information (if applicable)

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

The desired outcome of a SART meeting helps the student resolve barriers and promotes success in school. The SART agreement engages the student and parent/guardian of at-risk students and gives clear objectives, and addresses outcomes such as the need for social services, counseling services, credit recovery efforts and as a last result a referral to the truancy court. When students have the opportunity to be involved in making these choices, the student begins to take ownership and show accountability.

The measurable objective is to improve student attendance and increase graduation rates.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

Based on a concept of prevention, intervention and completion, the SART meeting provides wraparound services to address the needs of students and their families as it relates to truancy. The discovery of why a student is absent from school identifies the root cause of truancy.

Identifying causes of absences to consider:

- Homelessness or often changing schools
- Teen pregnancy or parenting teen
- Poverty
- Substance abuse
- Child abuse
- Family and personal issues (home dynamic)
- Poor relationships with teachers or peers
- Peer pressure

- Bored at school
- Poor academic performance for various reasons (supplies, laptop/chrome book, glasses)
- Mental health issues
- Does not feel safe at school
- Working long hours/or needs to work
- Unmanaged health issues
- Misconception of school policies
- Errors in attendance
- Families unsupportive

Questions to ask truant students (FWISD CTIP Handbook - Best Practices)

There is no need to read a list of questions but these are some areas that need to be addressed when conferencing with students.

- When you are absent, are your parents aware?
- Who are you with when you are supposed to be in school?
- Why are you missing classes?
- What are you doing and where are you going when you are supposed to be in school?
- Is there anybody on campus that makes you feel unsafe?
- Is there anybody at home or in your family that needs any help?
- Is there anything I can do or anyone I can refer you to for assistance?

Questions for parents (CTIP Handbook – Best Practices)

There is no need to read a list of questions but these are some areas that need to be addressed when conferencing with parents.

- Are there any reasons your child would not attend school?
- Are there any issues at home that cause your child to miss school?
- Has your child expressed concerns about problems in class or on campus?
- Are there any medical concerns that are causing your student to miss school?
- Is your child waking up on time to catch the bus?
- Has your child expressed any concerns about how he/she feels about him or herself?
- What can we do to help get your child to school?
- Is your child passing their class?

CTIP Tips for Professionals – Best Practices for SART meetings

Dealing with Angry Parent or Guardians:

- Pay attention: Just listen, let them talk until they are finished
- Clarify concern: if out of control refer to campus administrator. If issues are about you, try to educate them about the truancy process without becoming defensive
- Empathize: Acknowledge the parents' feelings. Seek to understand.

- Take responsibility: If responsible, acknowledge it
- Apologize: If you made an error, even if it is not entirely your fault. Sometimes that can de-escalate the conference
- Resolve it: Reassure parent you will address the issue
- Follow up: After you attempt to resolve issue, follow up with a parent

If the parent/legal guardian of the student do not show up for the SART meeting, send a notice by mail or email along with a copy of the agreement.

SART MEETING - NO SHOW NOTICE

Date

Student: (Name)

Dear: (Parent Name)

A meeting held at your child’s school, (School Name) on (Date), was to address your child’s attendance with FWISD School Officials. I have attached a copy of the Student Attendance Review Team (SART) contract agreement, which may keep you from court charges with, Parent Contributing to Non-Attendance. Please sign and return the contract to the school within three (3) days. The school currently has a SART, NO SHOW copy for their records.

Your child’s academic success is important to (School Name), however, there is a possibility of Court Action against you due to your child’s attendance. If you have any questions, please contact your child’s school at, 817-XXX-XXXX or you may call me at 817- XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Stay In School Coordinator
817- XXX-XXXX
XXXX@fwisd.org

Completing the SART Agreement at a home visit is also an option. CTIP highly recommends when applicable, to utilize the SART Agreement at ARD meetings, disciplinary conferences, or administrative transfers. The SART Agreement can also transfer from one school to another within the district. (During the same school year).

Complete the SART Agreement and **individualize the plan in the comment area of the form, to fit the needs of the student and the parent towards improvement.**



- INITIAL Date: ___/___/___
- FOLLOW UP: Date: ___/___/___

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REVIEW TEAM (SART) AGREEMENT

Student Name: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____ School: _____
 Parent/Guardian: _____ Telephone: (____) _____ - _____

Home Address _____ City _____ State TX Zip Code _____

THE STUDENT SHALL: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Attend school and all assigned class periods every day
 - Arrive at school and every class period on time
 - Obey all school rules, dress codes, and behave appropriately at school
 - Complete and return all homework and class assignments as directed
 - Participate in the following Counseling and Educational Program: _____
 - Other: _____
 - REVIEW/PROGRESS/COMMENTS: _____
- *Cause of Truancy _____

THE PARENT/GUARDIAN SHALL: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Provide the school with accurate contact information
- Ensure student is at school on time every school day
- Not remove child from school early without providing the school with a valid written excuse
- For all illness absences
 - a) Provide the school with written verification by doctor/medical provider; or
 - b) Send a written statement making the school aware of the student's illness
- For all absences, contact the School immediately to explain the absence
- Participate in the following Parenting and Counseling Program: _____
- Provide school/Administrator/Stay in School Coordinator (SISC) with written verification of counseling/parenting session attended/completed
- Attend all meetings scheduled by the School, Stay in School Coordinator, Attendance Control, FWISD Department of Student Discipline and Placement, and the Courts
- Maintain daily / weekly / monthly contact with your student's school regarding attendance, grades, behaviors, etc. (Circle One)
- Other: _____
- REVIEW/PROGRESS/COMMENTS: _____

TO THE STUDENT AND Parent(s) / Guardian (s):

I/We agree to abide by and participate in the above agreement from the dates of _____ through _____ and understand that if I/we fail to abide by the terms of this agreement, I/We may be referred to court for actions for Student Engaging in Truant Conduct (TEC § 25.085) which is a civil violation or Parent Contributing to Non- Attendance (TEC § 25.093) which is a Class C misdemeanor.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___
 Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___
 Stay in School Coordinator's Signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___

This contract was explained/interpreted to above participants by: _____

Revised 6/22/2018



- Fecha INICIAL: ___/___/_____
- Fecha de SEGUIMIENTO: ___/___/_____

ACUERDO CON EL EQUIPO DE REVISIÓN DE ASISTENCIA ESCOLAR (SART por sus siglas en inglés)

Nombre del estudiante: _____ Edad: _____ Grado: _____ Escuela: _____

Padre/guardián: _____ Teléfono: (_____) _____ - _____

Dirección _____ Ciudad _____ TX _____ Estado _____ Código Postal _____

EL ESTUDIANTE DEBE: (MARQUE TODO LO QUE CORRESPONDA) *Cause of Truancy _____

- Asistir a la escuela a todos los periodos de clase asignados cada día.
- Llegar a tiempo a la escuela y a todos los periodos de clase.
- Obedecer todas las reglas de la escuela, el código de vestimenta, y comportarse apropiadamente en la escuela.
- Completar y entregar todas las tareas y trabajos de clase como se le indique.
- Participar en el siguiente programa de consejería y educación: _____
- Otro: _____

REVISIÓN/PROGRESO/COMENTARIOS: _____

EL PADRE/GUARDIÁN DEBE: (MARQUE TODO LO QUE CORRESPONDA)

- Proveer a la escuela información exacta para poder comunicarse.
- Asegurarse de que el/la estudiante llegue a la escuela a tiempo cada día.
- No retirar temprano a su hijo/a de la escuela sin ofrecer a la escuela una excusa válida por escrito.
- Para todas las ausencias por enfermedad:
 - a) Entregar a la escuela una verificación del doctor/proveedor médico por escrito; o
 - b) Enviar una nota por escrito informando a la escuela sobre la enfermedad del estudiante.
- Para todas las ausencias, comunicarse directamente con la escuela para notificar la ausencia.
- Participar en el siguiente Programa de crianza de niños y consejería: _____
- Entregar a la escuela/administrador/coordinador de permanencia en la escuela (SISC por sus siglas en inglés) una verificación por escrito de las sesiones de consejería/crianza de niños (Parenting) a las que asistió/completó.
- Asistir a todas las reuniones planificadas por la escuela, el coordinador de permanencia en la escuela, control de asistencia, el departamento de disciplina y colocación de estudiantes, y las Cortes.
- Mantenerse en comunicación con la escuela del estudiante sobre su asistencia, calificaciones, comportamiento, etc. Diariamente / semanalmente / mensualmente. (Encierre una en un círculo)
- Otro: _____

REVISIÓN/PROGRESO/COMENTARIOS: _____

- Busca extender la fecha para completar a: ___/___/_____

AL ESTUDIANTE Y AL Padre(s) / Guardián (es):

Yo/Nosotros aceptamos cumplir y participar en el acuerdo descrito arriba y entiendo/entendemos que, si yo/nosotros no cumplimos con los términos de este acuerdo, yo/nosotros podría/podríamos ser referidos a la corte por acciones que incluyen, pero no están limitadas a multas de hasta \$500 y un periodo de probatoria de hasta seis (6) meses. El estudiante convicto de estar involucrado en conducta de ausentismo escolar, comete una violación de la ley civil, o el Padre que contribuye a la inasistencia (TEX §25.093) comete una violación de la ley criminal, lo que es un delito menor de Clase C castigable con una multa.

Firma del estudiante: _____ Fecha: ___/___/_____

Firma del padre/guardián: _____ Fecha: ___/___/_____

Firma del Coordinador de Permanencia en la Escuela: _____ Fecha: ___/___/_____

Este contrato se le explicó/ interpretó a los participantes mencionados arriba por: _____

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

Texas Truancy Laws require Districts to initiate truancy prevention measures on a student on the third absence within a four-week period. The Texas Education Agency adopted the rules in December 2016. School districts' truancy prevention measures must include at least one of the following:

- A behavior improvement plan that includes a specific description of required or prohibited behavior, the plan will be effective (not to exceed 45 days after the effective date of the contract), penalties for additional absences;
- School-based community service; or
- Referral to counseling, mediation, mentoring, teen court, community-based services, or other services to address the student's truancy.

The SART agreement (behavior improvement plan) established since 2001 covers all areas of truancy prevention measures. Our approach to addressing issues of truancy builds relationships and is restorative.

Project Timeline:

The SART Agreement requires follow up and monitoring through the entire school year.

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

The program's goal is to prevent students from dropping out and to increase attendance in school. If a student is not attending school, there is a reason. Poor attendance is a symptom of a larger issue(s). Our job is to find out what the issues(s) are and then find a solution(s) to help each student reach his/her greatest educational potential.

Data for school years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 show increase ADA and Graduation Rates in FWISD;

School Year	ADA Rate %	4 Year Graduation Rate %	5 Year Graduation Rate %
2015 - 2016	94.8%	85.1%	88.1%
2016 - 2017	94.6%	86.7%	89.9%
2017 - 2018	94.4%	89.7%	91.8%
2018 - 2019	95.0%	90.0%	92.1%

Texas Education Agency - Texas Academic Performance Report

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

Education: Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university: preferred in field of Social Science

Certification/License: Valid Texas driver's license. Must be able to obtain certification in Basic Mediation, Family Mediation, Truancy Mediation, and National Dropout Prevention Specialist certification.

Experience: Experience working in high-risk situations or three years of casework experience that includes home visits and community outreach.

Knowledge of FWISD policies, Texas state laws and guidelines regarding attendance and truancy, and a working knowledge of community resources preferred.

Since the onset of the program in 2001, FWISD Stay-In-School Coordinators have been trained in areas of; group and individual crises intervention and critical incident stress management, suicide risk assessment, de-escalating behavior and trauma response, restorative practices, substance abuse awareness, gang intervention, LGBTQ awareness, detecting child abuse and neglect, and multicultural competence scale training. The staff also trained in Advanced Mediation and Family Law to provide services to the fullest potential.

It is vital to have the commitment and cooperation from the campus level administrators and support staff in collaboration with the parent and student for the success of the plan.

Current Status of Project:

There have been many changes in the truancy laws and graduation requirements since the inception of the program. The original behavior plan model has continued to remain (with slight adjustments) a powerful tool.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

As a Stay-In-School Coordinator, my role is to provide the truancy prevention measures and fulfill required certification.

Lessons Learned:

- Keep a targeted focus
- Intervene early
- Provide resources to address core symptoms
- Build accountability
- Identify academic needs

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

School difficulties can range from minor to severe. School problems can have a negative impact on how young people feel about school and themselves. Sharing your passion and showing you care may connect them to accept the guidance they need to overcome the obstacle.