A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Student Attendance in Los Angeles County

A Report from the School Attendance Task Force
(Originally Convened as the Truancy Task Force)

A Project of the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council

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Improving Student Attendance in Los Angeles County

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A sign in one of our dependency courts says, “Educate is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.” Obviously, to obtain that passport, one needs to go to school.

Each year, our juvenile courts in Los Angeles County are involved with between 150,000 and 200,000 children and youth and their families through our three divisions—delinquency court, dependency court, and informal juvenile and traffic court. The overwhelming majority of these young people are of school age, and a large number of them have school issues, including those surrounding attendance. One obligation in the juvenile courts is to ensure the well-being of the children and youth we see, and education is one of our paramount concerns.

In 2005, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors created the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) to bring together the juvenile courts, county agencies (such as Probation, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Mental Health, and the Public Defender), school districts, and others to find ways to achieve better educational outcomes for the children and youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Los Angeles County. Under the auspices of the ECC, the Truancy Task Force—since renamed the School Attendance Task Force (SATF)—was created in late 2010.

The purpose of the SATF is to convene courts, youth-serving agencies, school districts, law enforcement, community entities, and others to:

- Review the school attendance issues that plague schools in all 81 school districts in our county
- Examine local approaches to improve school attendance
- Review efforts made in other jurisdictions
- Develop better, more, and—if necessary—new ways to enhance school attendance for all Los Angeles County schoolchildren, not just those before the juvenile courts (although that remains a high priority)

This report reflects the ongoing consistent and committed efforts of all those noted, plus others, to increase school attendance and enhance the educational experience of our children, improving the quality of their lives and, in turn, the quality of life for others in our communities.

School attendance is often a complex issue. There is no magic pill to cure its deficiencies. However, this report reflects a positive start to improvement. While great thanks is owed to our committed task force members—and especially to our ECC staff member Sharon Watson—we all recognize that this is only the beginning of our effort to help our children obtain that necessary passport to the future.

Michael Nash
Chair, School Attendance Task Force
Vice Chair, Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council
Both common sense and an impressive amount of research conclude that student attendance is absolutely critical to educational success. Students with severe attendance issues are unlikely to graduate from high school, a situation that in turn has serious long-term consequences both for the youth themselves and for our communities. Nonetheless, a crisis exists in Los Angeles County related to student attendance: according to data compiled by the California Department of Education, nearly three out of ten public school students in the county were classified as truants under California law for the 2009–2010 school year, and several districts in the county had truancy rates above 50 percent.\(^1\)

Although it is axiomatic that the success of our youth and the long-term health of our communities depend on their being in school and acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive as they transition to adulthood, Los Angeles County has a distressing attendance problem and no systemic approach to solve that problem. The Student Attendance Task Force hopes that this initial report is the first step of many in what must be a sustained and coordinated effort to improve student attendance rates across the county. Part of that effort must be improving access to information and emerging best practices, improving collaboration among agencies (both public and private) who work with youth, and coordinating with those agencies to implement approaches and programs that are proven to work.

The recommendations in this report—developed after months of discussion, research, and information-sharing—create a blueprint for the county that, if implemented, will result in significant attendance improvements and stronger student outcomes.

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\(^1\) California Department of Education, Safe & Healthy Kids Program Office, Los Angeles County Expulsion, Suspension, and Truancy Information for 2009–2010
Background

This section provides an overview of the key attendance definitions, research findings on effective practices for improving attendance and reducing truancy, and the existing legal framework that governs attendance and truancy in California. In addition, this section highlights several county-wide initiatives and other efforts that are currently underway to move from the criminalization of school attendance issues toward more research-based alternatives for improving attendance.

Key Definitions

Although recent research has identified certain attendance-rate thresholds that are particularly significant or predictive of student outcomes, the terminology adopted by various statutes or used by researchers and policy-makers varies considerably. In fact, the same term can have different meanings to different people or within different contexts.

In California, the legislature has enacted certain provisions in the Education Code that regulate student attendance and guide how school districts and other governmental agencies address student attendance issues. These definitions, however, do not align with the attendance-rate thresholds that researchers have identified as being of particular importance. Accordingly, for the sake of clarity, key terms are defined below.

Legal Definitions

- **Average Daily Attendance (ADA):** The total number of days of student attendance divided by the total number of days in the regular school year. ADA is usually lower than enrollment because of factors such as students moving, dropping out, or staying home as a result of illness. California uses a school district’s ADA to determine its general purpose (revenue limit) and some other funding.²

- **Truancy:** California has legal definitions for different levels of truancy.
  - **Truancy:** Any student who misses three days of school without a valid excuse in one school year, or who is tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year is truant.³
  - **Habitual Truancy:** The student has been reported as truant three or more times in a school year (after an initial report of truancy is filed, another report may be filed for each subsequent unexcused absence or tardy) and there has been a conscientious effort to hold at least one conference with the parent or guardian and the student.⁴
  - **Chronic Truancy:** Any student who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for 10 percent or more of the schooldays in one school year, provided that the appropriate

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² Generally, California Education Code §§46300-46307.1.
³ California Education Code §48260.
⁴ California Education Code §48262.
school district officer or employee has complied with certain requirements of notification and intervention required under the Education Code.\(^5\)

**Definitions from Social Science Research**

- **Satisfactory Attendance**: Missing 5 percent or less of school in an academic year, whether excused or unexcused.

- **Chronic Absence**: Missing 10 percent or more of school in an academic year for any reason, whether excused or unexcused. In numerous studies, this level of absence is strongly associated with declining academic performance.

- **Severe Chronic Absence**: Missing 20 percent or more of school in an academic year—approximately two months—for any reason, whether excused or unexcused. This level of absence is strongly predictive of the student eventually dropping out.

**Key Facts**

Although the importance of improving student attendance rates and reducing truancy in Los Angeles is fairly self-evident, research findings underscore both the urgency of addressing this issue and the need for interventions that are capable of assessing and addressing the root causes of truancy and poor student attendance.

- The negative impact of absences on literacy is 75 percent larger for low-income children, whose families often lack the resources to make up for lost time on task.\(^6\)

- Poor children are four times more likely to be chronically absent in kindergarten than their highest-income peers. Chronic absence in kindergarten predicts unsatisfactory fifth-grade outcomes for poor children.

- Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read proficiently in third grade.\(^7\)

- Chronically absent sixth-graders have lower graduation rates.\(^8\)

- Ninth-grade attendance predicts graduation for students of all economic backgrounds.\(^9\)

- Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic health and safety supports that mean a child is more likely to get to school. Among other issues, they often face:
  - Unstable housing
  - Limited access to health care

\(^5\) California Education Code §48263.6.

\(^6\) Ready, 2010.

\(^7\) Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011).


- Poor transportation
- Inadequate food and clothing
- Lack of safe paths to school, resulting from to neighborhood violence
- Chaotic schools with poor-quality educational programs

Although the critical importance of attendance as it relates to positive student outcomes is clear, California is one of only five states that do not include attendance in their longitudinal student database. Fortunately, in Los Angeles County, a number of school districts (including the Los Angeles and Alhambra unified school districts) have developed and begun implementing comprehensive data collection systems that allows for the tracking of daily attendance data, sometimes in real time.

**Legal Framework**

**Statutes that Criminalize Truancy**

The criminal justice system can be used to enforce compulsory education laws. In California, prosecutors can file charges against both parents and students in the juvenile delinquency and adult courts. The possibility of prosecution depends on whether a student has been classified as a truant, a habitual truant, or a chronic truant under California law. A summary of the various statutes that authorize prosecutions and the range of penalties is provided in Appendix Table A-1 in Appendix A.

Although the prosecution of students and parents may be appropriate in extreme cases—or as the last step in a broader, graduated system that provides assessments, referrals, and sufficient support to ensure that students and families can access services and resources to address the underlying conditions or reasons that caused the truancy—the Task Force was not able to identify any research supporting the efficacy of prosecution as a primary means to improve student attendance on a large scale. Indeed, as described in greater detail in the Research Summary section of Task Force Findings Related to Emerging, Effective Research-Based Alternatives starting on page 12, research on effective approaches overwhelmingly supports school-based rather than law enforcement–based interventions as the most effective approaches for both improving attendance rates and reducing rates of chronic absence.

**School Attendance Review Boards and Truancy Mediation**

The California Education Code requires that schools follow certain procedures before initiating prosecutions related to truancy. School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs) are local community boards that accept referrals from schools to assist in dealing with truancy and behavior problems. The boards have subpoena powers and the ability to order students and parents to address attendance issues. Any student who is a habitual truant, or is irregular in attendance, may be referred to a SARB or to the county Probation Department. Only after the SARB determines that the pupil or the parents or guardians of the pupil have failed to respond to the directives of the board, or that community resources cannot resolve the issue, can a petition be filed in juvenile court. In Los Angeles County, there are approximately 41 local School Attendance Review Boards.

For families residing within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles, SARBs have the option to refer parents to the City Attorney’s Office for prosecution if parents do not comply with SARB recommendations. Upon receipt of a referral for prosecution, the City Attorney’s Office
files charges, and parents are required to appear in court. Once in court, if parents are able to show compliance with the Education Code and exhibit a commitment to ensuring their child’s attendance, they are offered the option of formal diversion. Formal diversion allows parents the chance to avoid prosecution by following specific steps:

1. Parents come to court on a regular basis to show that their child is attending school every day.

2. Parents show compliance with other terms imposed by the City Attorney’s Office, which can include (but are not limited to) signing their child into school, attending parenting classes, attending family counseling, and volunteering at their child’s school.

The City Attorney’s Office individualizes the terms of diversion for each family to address the specific problems preventing daily school attendance.

Additionally, prior to initiating a prosecution, a school may request that the parent or guardian and the child participate in truancy mediation, which involves a meeting at the District Attorney’s office or at the Probation Department to discuss the possible legal consequences of the child’s truancy. SARBs can also refer cases to truancy mediation. In Los Angeles County, all local SARBs refer matters to local prosecutors for truancy mediation prior to requesting formal prosecution if the student and/or the parent or guardian does not comply with the SARB process.

**Daytime Curfew Ordinances**

Students who are absent from school may also be subject to citation by police officers under daytime curfew or anti-loitering laws. In 1995, the Los Angeles City Council enacted Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) §45.04, which makes it unlawful, with limited exceptions, for any youth under the age of 18 to be in a public place during the hours of the day when the youth’s school is in session. A similar code section—Los Angeles County Code 13.57.010, et seq.—applies to youth in Los Angeles County jurisdictions policed by the Sheriff’s Department. Almost every city in California has enacted similar ordinances over the last two decades.

In Los Angeles County, this type of ticket is referred to the Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court (IJTC), and has been punishable with a fine and the possible loss of driving privileges.

Unfortunately, in the absence of a comprehensive, research-based approach to addressing attendance-related issues in Los Angeles, the enforcement of daytime curfews has often been the primary response to truancy, and extensive resources and effort have been focused on using law enforcement to ticket and cite students. For example, between 2005 and 2009, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles Schools Police Department (LASPD) issued more than 47,000 tickets under the Los Angeles City curfew ordinance.\(^\text{10}\) Data related to curfew citations in other parts of Los Angeles County have not been collected or analyzed.

The Los Angeles City curfew ordinance’s burdens have fallen most heavily on low-income communities and on families who are least able to afford them.\(^\text{11}\) They include:

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\(^{11}\) A majority of LAUSD students live in families near or below the poverty line (California Department of Education DataQuest [2010]). Daytime curfew enforcement inherently targets lower-income students because students from
Hefty fines ($250 per citation plus court fees, which can result in fines in the thousands of dollars)

For every ticket issued, the loss for students of at least one day of school—and in some cases up to three days—to attend court

Lost average daily attendance funding, especially to the lowest-performing schools, for each day a student misses to attend court

Lost earnings by parents who must accompany children to court

Accumulated fines that low-income families cannot afford to pay, which result in youth being denied employment opportunities and driver’s licenses, further preventing them from moving forward as productive citizens

Moreover, enforcement of the daytime curfew has disproportionately affected African-American and Latino youth. For example, of the approximately 11,000 tickets issued by LASPD between 2005 and 2009, white youth residing within the Los Angeles Unified School District area did not receive any tickets at all, even though they represent 13.18 percent of total relevant youth. In contrast, African-American youth received 16.03 percent of the tickets issued, while representing only 9.88 percent of the underlying population. Latino youth received 71.76 percent of the tickets, while representing only 67.76 percent of total youth.12

No evidence exists that the city curfew statute has been effective in meeting its current objective to reduce juvenile crime or juvenile victimization, and substantial research shows that daytime curfews generally have no measurable impact on crime or victimization rates.13 Additionally, studies have shown that involving youth in the criminal justice system has the detrimental and unintended consequence of reducing their chances of graduating from high school.14 Rather than poorer families are more likely to walk or take public transit than their higher-income peers. Data collected also shows that schools where curfew enforcement has been most aggressive are concentrated in lower-income communities.

The data was obtained through Public Records Act requests from LASPD and LAPD, and includes figures for daytime curfew citations for the period 2004–2009. The baseline population for the City of Los Angeles includes all 5- to 17-year-old individuals within city bounds, regardless of school-enrollment status (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates). The baseline population for LAUSD includes all total relevant children regardless of school-enrollment status (NCES School District Demographics System, 2008 American Community Survey). Total relevant children represents all K–12 aged children eligible to enroll in LAUSD, even if they attend a non-LAUSD school. This number includes some individuals under 5 and over 17.


Johanna Wald and Michal Kurlaender, Connected in Seattle? An Exploratory Study of Student Perceptions of Discipline and Attachments to Teachers in NEW DIRECTIONS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: DECONSTRUCTING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE at 38 (2003); Gary Sweeten, Who Will Graduate? Disruption of High School Education by Arrest and Court Involvement, 23 JUSTICE QUARTERLY 462, 473, 478–79 (2006) [finding that one school-based arrest doubles the likelihood that the student will drop out and that if the student appears in court, the likelihood of drop-out nearly quadruples]; Jon Gunnar Bernburg & Marvin D. Krohn, Labeling, life chances, and adult crime: The direct and indirect effects of official intervention in adolescence on crime in early adulthood, 41 CRIMINOLOGY 287–1318 (2003) [juvenile justice involvement increases likelihood of dropping out by 3.6 times].
serving as a “wake-up call,” aggressive criminal justice–centered policies in and around schools are more likely to cause students to feel alienated from the educational system, causing further disengagement.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition, issuing tickets is a blunt tool that does not actually address the root causes for a student’s difficulties in getting to school. Many of the thousands of students in Los Angeles interviewed by the Community Rights Campaign, one of the organizations participating on the Task Force, reported a host of reasons for their struggle to get to school on time—their only means of transportation (the MTA bus) frequently runs late; they must walk their siblings to another school with a similar start time; they have a medical appointment; they are dealing with mental health issues; they have unaddressed special education needs or a chronic illness; they are being bullied; they are experiencing family problems at home; or student do not see the benefit of an education or feel connected to or safe at school. Younger students may be tardy as a result of their parents’ oversleeping, their parents’ mental health issues, or their parents’ not understanding the importance of children attending school regularly.

In addition, the fear of enforcement for tardiness at the schoolhouse gate can cause young people (and their families) to make the choice to stay away from school if they might be late. As one twelfth-grade female student stated: “I take the bus to school. So if the bus is running late, I sometimes turn around and go home because I do not want to risk getting a truancy ticket.”

Finally, citations result in the unnecessary criminalization and humiliation of youth, with students being detained, handcuffed, fingerprinted, put in the back seat of police cars, and searched.

**Efforts to Move from Criminalization to Prevention- and Research-Based Alternatives**

During the past two years, the LAPD has collaborated with Public Counsel, the Community Rights Campaign, and the ACLU of Southern California, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Mayor’s office, and the Los Angeles City Council, as well as the courts and various other regional government agencies to revise existing LAPD procedures aimed at reducing the number of daytime curfew tickets written to students, particularly African-American and Latino students. The resulting directive, issued in March 2011, instructs ticket task forces generally not to cite students during the first hour of classes and, instead, to help students get back to school. Other changes are designed to ensure that students stay in school so that they can acquire an education.

The LASPD has engaged in a similar collaborative effort and has met regularly with community-based organizations—including Dignity in Schools, the Community Rights Campaign, the ACLU-SC, the Youth Justice Coalition, Public Counsel, CADRE, and the Children’s Defense Fund—to revise its existing procedures and reduce the number of daytime curfew tickets for youth on their way to school. The resulting directive, issued on October 19, 2011, focuses cita-

tion efforts on students who are intentionally avoiding school, and utilizes research-based practices such as counseling students, relationship-building, and linking to community-based resources to assist students struggling with ongoing tardiness or poor attendance. The LASPD and LAPD directives are included in Appendix B.

Additionally, City Councilmember Tony Cárdenas introduced a motion in the fall of 2011 to make common-sense changes to the existing Los Angeles curfew ordinance that would redirect curfew enforcement to those students who are intentionally avoiding school or loitering in public spaces, and target resource-based community and school interventions for those students as opposed to issuing fines. (A copy is included as Appendix C.) Specifically, this motion would:

- Limit curfew enforcement on public sidewalks immediately adjacent to school grounds, school entrances, or school grounds so that youth at school or on their way to school are not ticketed
- Limit enforcement for young people going directly to or returning directly home from a public meeting or a school-related sporting event, dance, or activity
- Limit enforcement for a young person who is traveling to school, regardless of tardiness
- Provide that if a police officer does not document that he or she has assessed whether or not one of the statutory exceptions—such as a medical illness—applies before issuing the citation, or does not provide basic information regarding the student’s age and time of citation (for example, during the school day), the court can decide to dismiss the citation
- Provide that citations not be punishable by a fine but, rather, that students be directed to participate in a community or school resource-based program, such as a tutoring, mentoring, credit recovery, after-school program, or a teen or peer court program that helps address the root causes of truancy
- Give students the option of enrolling in a community or resource-based program and providing proof of program enrollment and completion to the court in lieu of their missing additional school time to attend court hearings
- Provide that LAPD share bi-annual statistics related to curfew enforcement with the City Council

The Los Angeles County District Attorney and the Los Angeles City Attorney have both implemented truancy intervention programs and have dedicated staff to work with students and parents at an early stage of truancy identification. The District Attorney’s Abolish Chronic Truancy Program (ACT) has been studied by the Rand Corporation and is an American Bar Association model program for addressing truancy. The ACT program, which served approximately 58,000 students and parents from September of 2006 to June of 2011, deals primarily with elementary-aged children and operates by sending deputy district attorneys and hearing officers into schools to work with students and families. At participating schools, students with attendance issues are identified and referred to the program. Students assigned to the program are longitudinally tracked for both further truancy and for subsequent involvement in the juvenile delinquency system. Annual internal reviews have demonstrated a 50 percent reduction in truancy rates among students referred to
the program, and only 1 percent of students who are in the ACT program are later identified by the Los Angeles Probation Department as being involved in the justice system.16

The City Attorney’s Truancy Prevention Program has educated over 250,000 families about the importance of attending school. The program’s letters have directed over 70,000 families to general assemblies where families are taught the legal and practical consequences of truancy. Additionally, almost 4,000 families have been referred to City Attorney Hearings for one-on-one intervention. From these families, counselors have taken over 200 to SARBs and have referred 70 families for court intervention that includes diversion in lieu of prosecution.

This changing emphasis from law enforcement agencies coincides with an increasing recognition by school districts of the need to address student attendance in a comprehensive manner. Several school districts have begun implementing promising programs that focus on identifying the root causes of chronic absences and quickly providing resources to address those problems.

❖ Long Beach Unified School District has a well-regarded Truancy Counseling Center program that has served as a model for other districts. The program’s purpose is to deter truancies and suspensions, serve as an alternative for the suspension of students to their homes, and provide a service to parents, students, and school staff. Recognizing that truancy is a symptom of other issues, program staff make efforts to engage parents when they come to pick up their youth and enroll them in parenting classes, counseling, and other services.

❖ Lynwood Unified School District has implemented a three-tiered approach to improving school attendance, which consists of:
  - Prevention (a focus on school-site attendance data and increasing student and family awareness that every minute of school counts)
  - Intervention (requiring the district to partner and collaborate with other organizations to provide such services as wraparound, case management, and mental health)
  - Recognition (identifying students, families, and school sites that show improvement in attendance)

❖ In line with its existing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Policy, the Los Angeles Unified School District recently implemented a three-tiered approach to improving school attendance that provides different sets of interventions matched to the level of student truancy. This approach recognizes that at the first tier—or —universalevel”—providing a positive school climate/culture is key, as are attendance expectations and school-wide incentives for achieving those expectations. (Additional information on this policy and initiative is pro-

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16 ACT statistics are taken from three sources. First, detailed internal data are kept on a monthly basis. Second, the Rand Corporation has studied the ACT Program as part of the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act grant administered by the Probation Department. The last period for which it studied the program and reported results was in March of 2009. Rand reported outcomes for 4,125 youth; of that number, only one youth was arrested during the baseline period and three were reported arrested during their participation in the program. There were no incarcerations in the baseline or during the program. School absences decreased 54 percent in the school year of 2006–2007. This third outcome was reported by an independent outcome evaluation survey of the ACT Program commissioned by the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office. The study was conducted by Earl Vincent primarily to inform management of the success of the program.
Provided in Appendix D.) The district also has alternative education programs in place, such as its Frida Kahlo High School, that incorporate elements of the national Big Picture Learning approach promoting a “one child at a time” philosophy, a welcoming school culture, project-based learning, mentors, and community internships to promote attendance and academic achievement.

LAUSD has also launched a media campaign to market improved attendance for its students, with a component that makes parents more aware of the detrimental effect of truancy on their children’s well-being. In implementing its approach, LAUSD recognizes that:

- Attendance is a behavior, and we can teach good attendance habits.
- We must intervene early with students having attendance problems.
- Attendance must be closely monitored.
- The effectiveness of interventions must be regularly assessed.

Moreover, because attendance is frequently a symptom of other underlying issues, LAUSD’s policy directs that schools work to ensure that students identified as being at risk are assessed on six different levels—family dynamics, community, social-emotional, medical/physical, behavioral, and academic achievement—to target appropriate intervention.

As described in greater detail beginning on page 14, the Alhambra Unified School District has implemented a research-based, comprehensive approach to addressing student attendance issues that is nationally recognized and has generated several years’ worth of improved student attendance data.

That positive progress is being made on all these fronts to incorporate and pursue alternatives to criminalization, as well as to implement strategies that address the root causes of school absences, is extremely promising. However, the number of truancy citations remains high, and the overall rate of school attendance in the county remains lower than that necessary to ensure that young people achieve in school. As such, a countywide effort to systematize and integrate practices with other agencies, promote reforms, eliminate practices that have proven to be ineffective and/or are not supported by research, and align the practices, funding, and resources of agencies with the research-based approaches that have proven to be most effective, is long overdue.

**Historic Opportunity to Implement a Research-Based, Comprehensive Approach: the Countywide School Attendance Task Force**

Under the leadership of Michael Nash, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court and Vice Chair of the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council (ECC), a countywide School Attendance Task Force was convened in the fall of 2010, under the auspices of the ECC, to better understand the issue in Los Angeles County and, ultimately, to develop a set of recommendations for countywide implementation. To this end, the Task Force explored:

- The approaches being used in the county and elsewhere by major stakeholder groups, including the courts, law enforcement, schools, and communities
- Which policies and practices appear to be working and which are not
- Current research-based models for improving attendance and reducing tardiness
The Task Force has met each month since its inception, and includes leaders from each major stakeholder group (see School Attendance Task Force Members on page iv of this report). The Task Force spent its first year reviewing information on current programs being developed or implemented by school districts, the juvenile court, law enforcement agencies, community groups, and the business community both in Los Angeles County and around the country. The meetings included presentations on these programs and a review of data and other measurements of outcomes for students who participate in these programs. A summary of the topics covered in the monthly meetings is provided in Appendix E.

Through ongoing dialogue and a review of existing and promising practices in this area, the Task Force has developed a set of recommendations for reforms that should result in significant reductions in attendance-related issues, stronger school outcomes, and less court and criminal justice involvement.
Research Summary
The Task Force reviewed published research measuring the effectiveness of various programs around the country aimed at addressing truancy or improving school attendance. The review, which included dozens of published studies, focused on those that evaluated data on outcomes associated with different programs. The findings from this review support several interventions in four categories, briefly summarized below.¹⁷

Despite the importance of student attendance and the number of initiatives that schools and other agencies have launched to address truancy or to improve student attendance over the years, however, surprisingly little research evaluates programs based on outcome data—in other words, comparing attendance rates prior to the initiation of the program or evaluating the attendance data of students enrolled in a program compared to a control group. Thus, certain approaches may be considered best practices despite the absence of any research demonstrating their actual effectiveness.

On the other hand, the absence of research confirming an intervention’s effectiveness does not mean that the program is not, in fact, effective. In crafting its recommendations, the Task Force incorporated all elements that are strongly supported by research and included others that are considered best practices or have been included in programs that draw heavily from evidence-based practices.

Data Collection/Analysis System and an Assessment Process for Students with Attendance Issues
It is clear that schools must implement and utilize an attendance-data collection system capable of allowing real-time analysis of student attendance. Without such a system, schools cannot understand the full scope of any attendance problems, and also cannot accurately identify individual students with moderate to serious attendance issues. Furthermore, without a comprehensive system in place, schools do not have the ability to evaluate program effects.

A complete assessment process is also essential for determining the primary causes for student attendance issues. As described by Lyon and Cotler (2009), there are four dimensions in which students refuse school:

- To avoid school-related stimuli that provoke negative feelings
- To escape aversive social or evaluative situations
- To obtain parental attention
- To receive positive tangible reinforcement

¹⁷ The Task Force would like to thank Amber Rivas, a student at the USC School of Social Work, for her work on the literature review and for preparing the research summary that formed the basis of this section of the report.
Wilson, Gottfredson, and Najaka (2001) found that interventions that target at-risk youth are necessary to address chronic absenteeism, so it is essential that schools implement and monitor a data system that allows them to identify these students. Without a comprehensive assessment process, school administrators are unable to determine the reason or reasons a student misses school and are therefore unable to develop appropriate interventions.

**Parental Involvement**

Several studies discuss the effectiveness of parental involvement at both improving student attendance and improving academic achievement. According to DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewitt, Kitzman, and Cole (2007), Balfanz, Herzog, and Maclver (2007), and Epstein and Sheldon (2002), parental involvement is significantly and positively correlated with student attendance. Jeynes (2003), Fan and Chen (2001), and Hill and Tyson (2009) also argue that parental involvement is positively correlated with student academic achievement, such as grade point average and performance on standardized tests. Fan and Chen (2001) report that parental aspirations and expectations for children’s educational achievement has the strongest relationship with student academic achievement, while Hill and Tyson (2009) similarly argue that academic socialization—which includes such activities as creating an understanding about the purposes, goals, and meaning of academic performance; communicating expectations about involvement; and providing strategies the student can use effectively—has the strongest and most positive correlation with academic achievement.

**Broad School-Based Interventions**

Because conditions at schools have been identified as the leading factor contributing to truancy, school-based interventions focused on addressing attendance have become commonplace across the nation. In their research, Balfanz et al. (2007) identified several components found to be successful at improving student attendance, including:

- The consistent recognition of positive behavior and good attendance
- Delivering a consistent response to the first absence or incident of inappropriate behavior
- Creating individually targeted efforts for students who are unresponsive to positive incentives and recognition
- As a last resort, assigning a specific adult, usually one of the student’s main teachers, to mentor the student

Again, if effective data systems are not in place to alert school officials when attendance problems arise, these immediate interventions will not be effective. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) also found that the use of incentives for positive behavior and attendance is positively correlated with both increasing daily school attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism. Consistent with these findings, research supports a three-tiered approach to improving student attendance: focusing broad interventions on all students, more targeted interventions on students who meet certain criteria as being at risk for poor attendance, and substantial interventions on students with intensive needs (Balfanz et al., 2007).
Mental Health Treatment Paired With Parent Training and School/Family Communication

A significant amount of research supports an approach to improving school attendance that includes the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for students who have documented attendance issues. In a meta-analysis evaluation showing that school-based intervention improves student attendance, Wilson et al. (2001) found that interventions that incorporated CBT were the most effective. Maynard, Pigott, Tyson-McCrea, and Kelly (2009) also conducted a meta-analysis and systematic review of interventions aimed at improving school attendance and found that CBT, especially when paired with parent training, was the most effective approach. Doobay (2008), who argues that CBT is the only intervention for school-refusal behavior with sufficient empirical support, reviewed a case study of a seven-year-old Latina who received CBT, parental training for her mother, and communication with the child’s teachers, which resulted in the child’s successful reintegration into school, her achievement of a regular school routine, and her eventual ability to maintain improved behaviors without ongoing treatment. In a randomized controlled trial, King, Tonge, Heyne, Pritchard, Rollings, Young, Myerson, and Ollendick (1998) also found CBT paired with parent and teacher training to be effective at improving school attendance, with improvements maintained at a follow-up measurement.

National Best Practice Models: Alhambra and Baltimore

As noted, Task Force members heard from a number of leaders regarding initiatives and programs developed to address attendance-related issues. Two programs in particular stood out because they provide comprehensive, school-based approaches to addressing student attendance issues that incorporate research-based practices and were supported by data reflecting improved outcomes.

Alhambra Unified School District

The Alhambra Unified School District (AUSD) has an enrollment of 18,541, with students’ families being predominately low-income immigrants. Approximately 53 percent are Asian, 40 percent Latino, 1 percent African-American, and 9 percent Caucasian and others. AUSD students speak 27 different languages and over half are non-citizens, with one-fourth having arrived in the United States less than three years ago. Nearly 70 percent of students reside in low-income homes and between 70 and 81 percent of students receive free and reduced-price lunches. One hundred percent are eligible for Title I funding.

In 2008–2009, the AUSD truancy rate was 37.2 percent higher than that of Los Angeles County as a whole. High school rates were 44.5 percent, elementary rates were 26.09 percent, and the total district rate was 28.73 percent. Between seventh and eleventh grade, truancy rates more than doubled, highlighting the need for early intervention. In that year, AUSD had a total of 5,364 students—4,473 of them in high school—who met the criteria of ‘truant’ as set by the state of California.

AUSD decided to take concrete and systemic action to address the issue. As a result, in the 2009–2010 school year, the number of students labeled as truant fell to 2,263, a 42 percent reduction from 2008–2009. At the half-way point for the 2010–2011 school year, this decline in truancies has continued at a rate of over 61 percent.
**Gateway to Success.** A key reason for this substantial drop in truancies is the intensive work with families conducted by AUSD through its Gateway to Success Program (“Gateway”). A 2008 U.S. Department of Education Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant—$7 million over four years—provides the funding for this program, which links district students with counselors or other health and wellness resources to help them with the challenges that interfere with their academic, personal, or social adjustment. Mental health and wellness programs are brought directly to school sites and services are available to all students, whether they have health insurance or not. Sixteen hundred students now receive school-based mental health and other supportive services through the Gateway program (much of it through community-based providers, without any cost to AUSD), which starts at the pre-school level and extends through the twelfth grade.

The goal of Gateway is to increase access to high-quality school-based mental health care by developing innovative, research-informed approaches that link the school system with the local mental health system. This framework was developed to align with a three-tier public health framework aimed at improving prevention, diagnosis, and treatment services. As shown in Figure 1, the continuum of efforts includes:

- **Universal prevention** strategies aimed at reducing risk factors, enhancing protective factors, and ameliorating difficulties before they occur
- **Early intervention** emphasizes the early identification of and intervention for at-risk youth
- **Intensive strategies** involve treatment to reduce the impact of existing problems

![Figure 1. Alhambra Unified School District Gateway to Success Behavioral Pyramid](image)

This evolving framework has now expanded district-wide and employs a multi-layered approach, incorporating comprehensive prevention and intervention services to reduce campus violence and student behavioral and substance-related problems, and increase the reach of school-based mental health services.

**Centralized and School-Site Management Teams and Referral System.** Central to this framework is a multidisciplinary management team—consisting of leadership from the school district, community partners, and higher education—that was formed to drive the project. The Mental Health Integration Team (MHIT) conducts strategic planning, expands partnerships, oversees pro-
gram implementation, and monitors outcomes achieved. Program success is dependent on collaborative relationships between the MHIT, the superintendent, the board of education, community partners, and school-site personnel. To ensure the participation of all stakeholders, a Gateway Advisory Board was created to oversee program progress and expenditures, continuously review outcomes, and make mid-course adjustments as needed. The Advisory Board involves multiple and diverse community sectors and includes the chief of police; the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s office, Department of Mental Health, and Office of Education; Gateway’s external evaluator; and community stakeholders. Both student and parent advisory committees also provide ongoing feedback to ensure program responsiveness to the district’s cultural and language needs. The focus of all of these entities is to determine how to effectively integrate school and community resources in policy and practice, with a common goal of promoting healthy child and youth development for all students and breaking down barriers to learning.

To meet district need, the MHIT assessed service availability through resource mapping and a gap analysis (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). This process led to a strategic plan to integrate school-based and school-linked services. Periodic resource mapping evaluates the evolution of the process and allows for midcourse correction, with the goal of maintaining a sustainable infrastructure. The MHIT identified and partnered with community agencies with the capacity to provide services, completing a formal collaborative agreement with each that specifies roles and responsibilities.

Representatives from each partnering agency participate on the School Site Team—school staff, community partners, law enforcement, and site administrators—that provides site-based management for the strategic plan developed by the MHIT, and supervises school-wide student support issues and crises, coordinates universal and early interventions, and collaborates with school site staff. The School Site Team also monitors students identified as at risk, facilitates their referral to and engagement in services, and supports families through the referral process. Representatives from partnering agencies who participate on the School Site Team deliver a range of evidence-based, developmentally appropriate approaches. This ensures the quality of treatment and increases the range, quantity, and availability of services. Culturally responsive mental health providers who speak predominant languages are also included on the School Site Team.

Completed referral forms are submitted to the School Site Team leadership and the team assigns and tracks each referral to mental health service providers who are either employed by or contract with the school district. Prior to assignment, the team leader initiates contact with the family, introduces the services to be provided, assesses for third-party payment, and prepares the family for the subsequent contact with the service provider.

**Ongoing Training.** All school personnel (teachers, administrators, special education, support and clerical staff, as well as instructional and yard duty aides, etc.) and partnering agencies participate in cross-training—jointly training multiple disciplines—on topics that include the identification of mental health risk factors, available services, the referral protocol, school culture, collaboration strategies, confidentiality, and family privacy, as well as culturally sensitive intervention. To increase capacity, school and partnering agency staff participate in crisis response training. Staff is also trained on data gathering and input procedures. Outcomes are disseminated through training so that data-driven decisions are made.

**Data Tracking.** To evaluate the impact of this coordinated mental health structure, a computer-based surveillance system tracks student referrals and linkages. This system monitors individual
student activity from referral to service termination, and allows for the analysis of the Gateway program’s impact on service capacity and access. Student-level data (attendance, disciplinary actions, and academic performance) are considered in conjunction with program-specific service utilization data to determine whether a particular service or cluster of services is correlated with utilization. This system provides quantitative data to characterize referrals, including ethnicity, age, gender, grade level, service acceptance and service linkage, units of service, length of service, school performance, and treatment outcome. A surveillance and referral system to address mental health needs is critical to ensure the efficacy and sustainability of this system.

**Benefits of Collaboration.** This model encourages teamwork and collaboration between school personnel and partnering agencies with the goal of increasing capacity and service access. Collaboration is interwoven at every program level. Leadership is provided through the MHIT and the School Site Team, which incorporates representatives from a continuum of stakeholders with the goal of improved care and coordination. This comprehensive approach continues to develop alongside more sophisticated outcome evaluations. As a result of the ongoing collaboration, a host of other reforms have been achieved, including a safety net of intervention services available to students when they return to school; a central process for all referrals (attendance, behavioral, mental health, and so on); and the addition of university interns, including clinically trained psychologists, on every school campus to leverage resources.

**Parent University and Other Parent Engagement Initiatives.** An innovative Parent University holds monthly workshops at which hundreds of parents learn techniques to help their students improve. Among other things, the University helps parents understand how to navigate the school system, what their students need to succeed, and how to prevent power struggles with their children; it also includes an LGBTQ curriculum. In addition, a local evaluation team measures the effects of a range of efforts—anti-bullying campaigns; Internet safety promotion; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention; violence prevention; mental health services for different ethnic groups; and so forth. Parents also receive ongoing support from Parent University staff. School staff, district and community partners, police, mental health agencies, and the courts invite parents to join the University and encourage their participation. The Gateway program also offers Incredible Years, a free eight-week program for parents with children between the ages of three and five that is important in building a school-going culture among families whose children will be entering AUSD. (Additional information on the Parent University and the Incredible Years program appears in Appendix F.)

**Reward System for Attendance.** Each school works with the Gateway to Success program and has its own system for rewarding students for outstanding or improved attendance. At the elementary level, students are recognized at assemblies and given certificates. At the high schools, assistant principals, counselors, and teachers reward and congratulate students individually. Students are also rewarded for perfect attendance at each school site.

**Review of Disciplinary Exclusions.** AUSD reviewed the number of suspensions and expulsions in its schools, recognizing that disciplinary exclusions also affect student attendance. AUSD has since developed policies to minimize disciplinary exclusions, including requiring schools to use multiple interventions prior to initiating a suspension and to document these interventions for low-level offenses such as defiance. As a result of these efforts, disciplinary exclusions have dropped consistently over the last two academic years, as summarized in Table 1.
Table 1. Alhambra Unified School District Disciplinary Exclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008–2009 School Year</th>
<th>2010–2011 School Year</th>
<th>Percent Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended for expulsion</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High school students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended for expulsion</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SARB Process Linked to Real Services and Interventions and Only After Multiple Interventions. AUSD has also integrated the SARB process into its graduated response to attendance issues and requires documentation that the school has made multiple efforts to connect the student and/or family to resources before proceeding with a SARB referral. In addition, AUSD utilizes the SARB process in a manner that focuses on prevention and intervention, rather than scare tactics and punitive responses. Real resources are provided and the SARB’s stated goal is to provide prevention and support services to students and families with various needs. As such, the SARB process in AUSD is used as the tool of last resort when other approaches have failed. Of the 71 students who appeared at a SARB hearing during the 2009–2010 school year, 51 (almost 72 percent) demonstrated improved attendance, defined as a student who improved his or her attendance at least 50 percent since the hearing. Of the 85 students who appeared at a SARB hearing during 2010–2011, 54 (almost 64 percent) demonstrated improved attendance.

Alignment with Evidence-Based Practices. The Alhambra program includes several components that draw on evidence-based research on effective truancy reduction.

- First, it links students who have attendance issues with mental health and other supportive agencies through its Gateway to Success program; the Task Force learned anecdotally that many, if not most, of the outside providers utilize CBT.  

- Second, the Alhambra program utilizes the three-tiered approach—focusing broad interventions on all students, more targeted interventions on students who meet certain criteria as being at-risk for poor attendance, and substantial interventions on students with intensive needs—supported by Balfanz et al. (2007).

- Third, it focuses on parent involvement at multiple levels by providing parenting support in the form of a Parent University, Incredible Years, and other parenting classes and workshops.

- Finally, Alhambra has instituted a comprehensive real-time data tracking system. Student-level data (attendance, disciplinary actions, and academic performance) are considered in conjunction with program-specific service utilization data to determine whether a particular service or cluster of services is correlated with utilization.

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18 Doobay (2008), King et al. (1998), and Maynard et al. (2009) all concluded that CBT partnered with parent training is effective at improving school attendance.

19 Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that parent workshops are effective in both improving daily school attendance and also reducing chronic absenteeism. Hill and Tyson (2009) found a correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement, especially with parental academic socialization.
Baltimore City Schools

Baltimore City Schools serve 85,000 students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade in 200 schools. Of these students, 87 percent are African-American, 9 percent white, 3 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 1 percent other ethnicities. Eighty-three percent are eligible for free and reduced-priced meals, and there is a 32 percent rate of student mobility. With 60 percent of the district’s teachers being considered —highly qualified,” Baltimore has 90 percent average daily attendance, and a 31 percent chronic absence rate.  

Overview of the Baltimore Approach. When Baltimore City Schools realized that attendance rates could accurately predict school drop-outs, education leaders in Baltimore partnered with researchers at Harvard Law School and the SOROS Foundation, among others, to study and understand the extent of the problem. As part of this process, they identified 100 public and private partners to serve on an Attendance Taskforce and develop a set of recommendations. Taskforce members quickly focused in on prevention and intervention. With such a range of partners at the table, resources could be targeted to address barriers facing families, such as instability/mobility, homelessness, and lack of transportation and health care. The Baltimore Attendance Taskforce recommendations included:

- Instituting a text-messaging transportation campaign to gather data about student experiences getting to and from school
- Increasing the use of and institutionalizing best practices through a change in direction from a student-focused lens to a school-focused lens
- Leveraging the impact of after-school and community programs on attendance
- Making attendance a —must-respond-to” indicator for youth-serving agencies
- Improving the identification of and responsiveness to homeless youth
- Changing student and parental attitudes about attendance

Based on these recommendations, Baltimore is now conducting a multi-year campaign to improve student attendance rates. For the first year of its campaign (2009–2010), the key components of Baltimore’s attendance strategy included examining the data, spreading the word through community forums, and identifying partner agencies and leaders to drive reforms. The second year (2010–2011) focused on maintaining the momentum by strengthening universal approaches, deepening the work with special populations, implementing a coordinated campaign, targeting chronically absent students going into sensitive transition grades (kindergarten and sixth and ninth grades), and revising/improving the use of attendance data. Some key reforms or initiatives that have been adopted are summarized below.

Implementing Universal Strategies to Improve Attendance and Targeting Interventions for Students with Persistent Attendance Issues. As with AUSD’s program, Baltimore employs a three-tiered approach, with particular emphasis on the following strategies (based on research-based practices) to improve and underscore the importance of student attendance:

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20 Sue Fothergill, Director of Baltimore City School’s Attendance Counts Initiative, presented at the August 9, 2011, Task Force meeting. This section of the report is based on the information and data she provided during her presentation, plus follow-up conversations that Task Force members had with Ms. Fothergill.
• Effective and engaging instruction
• Intentionally inviting family participation from the outset
• Building an early-warning system that uses multiple measures of attendance, including suspension
• Establishing a school-going culture, but recognizing that the basis of good attendance is having a good school to attend
• Same-day follow-up with parents for every absence, making person-to-person contact
• Where absenteeism is high in a particular school, listening to students, parents, and teachers to learn what would help
• Utilizing attendance incentives
• Individual assessments and community supports, creating a service-rich plan for students who have been chronically absent in prior years, including wraparound services, case management, and special activities to increase a feeling of belonging
• Increased interventions for students who miss a lot of school—conducting home visits, assigning a mentor for daily check-in, inviting the family to school attendance hearings, and, as a last resort, conducting a court-based student attendance hearing, preferably through family court

Baltimore’s policy also requires, in all instances, that schools offer positive supports to promote school attendance before resorting to punitive responses or legal action. Other key policy changes include:

• Ensuring that schools are places where older students want to be
• Ensuring that students have a voice
• Holding schools and youth-serving agencies—as well as students and their families—accountable for student attendance
• Providing many more incentives than punitive responses
• Offering students meaningful choices and alternatives that address why students are absent, such as work-to-learning opportunities, academic options, and social/emotional supports.

Additionally, in response to data showing that attendance was especially poor the first years after students transitioned from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school, the Baltimore City School District closed or phased out most of its stand-alone middle schools and replaced them with pre-kindergarten through eighth grade and sixth- to twelfth-grade transformation schools.

**Reducing Disciplinary Exclusions.** Baltimore also committed to end its practice of using punitive out-of-school suspensions to punish lack of attendance and defiance and, instead, focuses on a problem-solving, data-centered approach to keep children in school. Baltimore also targeted its high suspension rate, recognizing that sending children home puts them further behind academically and makes them far more likely to drop out. The school district partnered with community stakeholders to review and substantially revise the discipline code (Figure 2), particularly provisions that had allowed high rates of disciplinary exclusion for defiant behaviors such as talking
back and for absences (students may not be suspended for poor attendance in California). As a result, the number of suspensions dropped from 26,310 to 9,712 over a two-year period (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Baltimore City Schools Discipline Code

Discipline Code Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INAPPROPRIATE AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS AND LEVELS OF RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KEY: USE LOWEST LEVEL INDICATED FIRST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 1:</strong> Classroom Support and Student Support Team may be appropriate when student has an incident, and the incident has not been put in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 2:</strong> Intensive Support Staff and Appropriate Administration may be appropriate when supports have been put in place in the classroom to address behavior but the behavior has continued to negatively impact the learning of the student and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 3:</strong> Suspension and Referral may be appropriate when interventions have been put in place but the behavior is escalating (repeated offenses).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 4:</strong> Extended Suspension, Expulsion, and Referral may be appropriate when student’s behavior seriously impacts the safety of others in the school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DRESS CODE VIOLATION (807)

- Refer to dress code standards listed on pages 28-30
- Unexcused Absences
- Persistent or Excessive Absence
- Alcohol – Under the Influence

Figure 3. Baltimore City Schools Decreases in Absences and Suspensions

Chronic Absence in the middle grades decreased by 15%

Over 16,000 Fewer Suspensions in Baltimore City Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL LEVEL</th>
<th>% Chronic Absence 2006-7</th>
<th>% Chronic Absence 2007-8</th>
<th>% Chronic Absence 2008-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENTARY GRADES</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE GRADES</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL CITY SCHOOLS</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other District Initiatives included:
- closed/phased out most stand alone middle schools
- Opened more than 30 prekindergarten – 8th grade structured schools
- Supported the creation of innovation, transformation and charter schools and increased school choice.
Prioritizing Data Analysis and Data-Based Decision-Making. Because chronic absence is often a signal of family or community distress, Baltimore prioritizes the use of data on absences to allocate preschool and early resources, provide free tax-preparation and tax-credit outreach, and target health, housing, and other resources. For example, one elementary school focused on education and access to medical resources to address asthma after identifying high incidences of asthma as a principal cause of high absence rates among many of its students. Additionally, by requiring biweekly reviews by key district personnel of attendance data and making attendance a ‘must-respond-to’ indicator, district leadership can be proactive in addressing issues at the school level that may be contributing to poor attendance, and are able to hold site administrators accountable for addressing individual student attendance issues as they arise.

Evidence of Improved Outcomes. As a result of this coordinated and focused campaign, Baltimore City chronic absence and habitual truancy rates are declining, particularly in elementary and middle school. Chronic absence in the middle grades has decreased by 15 percent, and more than 16,000 fewer suspensions occurred in Baltimore City public schools. This transformation requires persistent monitoring and analysis; a team in Baltimore’s headquarters consistently reviews attendance and suspension data on a school-by-school basis and provides additional support and training to schools with disproportionately high numbers of either absences or suspensions.

Alignment with Evidence-Based Practices. The Baltimore approach incorporates several of the evidence-based practices that the School Attendance Task Force identified as being proven to improve student attendance.

- First, the Baltimore model involves broad-based school interventions that have been demonstrated to improve student attendance. Balfanz et al. (2007) concluded that effective strategies include:
  - The recognition of positive behavior and good attendance
  - Consistent responses to first absences
  - Individually targeted efforts for students who do not respond to positive incentives
  - Assigning a teacher to mentor the student.

  All of these are components of Baltimore’s program.

- Further, Balfanz et al. (2007) recommend a similar three-tiered approach, focusing broad interventions on all students, more targeted interventions on students who meet certain criteria as being at-risk for poor attendance, and substantial interventions for students with intensive needs.

- Additionally, specific elements of the more targeted interventions are supported by research.
  - DeSocio et al. (2007) concluded that an intervention program that utilizes mentorship with a teacher is effective at improving school attendance.
  - The involvement of the student’s parent or guardian is supported by Jeynes (2003) and Hill and Tyson (2009), who concluded that parental involvement positively influences academic functioning, and school attendance has been found to be correlated with academic achievement (Reid, 2008).
Epstein and Sheldon (2002) concluded that providing students with incentives for good attendance, communication with families, and after-school programs were all positively correlated with daily school attendance and negatively correlated with chronic absenteeism, adding that home visits are effective at reducing chronic absenteeism.
Task Force Recommendations

Based on the School Attendance Task Force’s research and review of effective policies and programs employed by various government and non-governmental agencies to address attendance issues in California and nationwide, and taking into account some of the unique circumstances related to size and transportation in Los Angeles County, the Task Force recommends the following reforms, toward the goal of creating a comprehensive and integrated system for addressing attendance and truancy.

Through the School Attendance Task Force, stakeholders will coordinate strategies, share best practices, and track outcomes. The Task Force will also develop an action plan to outline strategies and timelines for implementing the recommendations in this report.

**Countywide**

1. **Maintain a vibrant School Attendance Task Force** with stakeholders from school districts, the courts, law enforcement, the community, and other relevant entities to implement the recommendations in this initial report, review key data, evaluate the effectiveness of various programs and interventions, promote the replication of effective models, and, where necessary, encourage the modification or enhancement of promising programs.

   - The School Attendance Task Force reports its work to the Education Coordinating Council and other boards/commissions, as appropriate.
   - The Task Force collects bi-annual statistics from public agencies with roles in implementing or enforcing policies that affect student attendance.

2. **Develop information-sharing protocols among stakeholder agencies/groups.** Existing inter-sector and interdepartmental data systems will be reviewed as a starting place, and barriers to sharing will be addressed and overcome through collaborative efforts, a blanket court order, or legislation.

**Schools**

All school districts in Los Angeles should establish a sensible and sustainable district-wide model for ensuring that students regularly attend and stay in school by incorporating the critical elements of recognized, proven approaches developed by Baltimore, Alhambra, and other school districts, as highlighted below. Many districts already have structures in place that could be strengthened or modified to achieve these recommendations. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District recently developed a three-tiered structure for addressing attendance issues. Focusing on implementation is critical for these districts, and they should draw on the experiences of Alhambra and other proven programs as they move forward.

1. **Focus on proven universal strategies** such as:
   
   - Effective and engaging instruction (such as Big Picture Learning’s one-student-at-a-time, advisor-led, project-based approach), and proven alternative-school models for students with challenging or special needs
Transforming schools to create a positive culture with high expectations, a welcoming environment, excellent management, good teachers, a solid curriculum, strong parent involvement and engagement, and learning environments that are culturally relevant and respectful of the skills and knowledge students bring to school; in these schools, for example, if a student is missing from school, staff members may go to their homes and knock on the door to find out what’s wrong.

Teaching good attendance practices to families and students

2. Create a strong attendance data collection and dissemination system that helps target interventions early and often.
   - Ensure that teachers submit attendance information on a daily basis.
   - Collect and regularly publish school-district attendance data that include a strong focus on chronic absences and severe chronic absences, and that highlight suspensions and other out-of-school exclusions, in addition to excused and unexcused absences.
   - Make accurate, real-time attendance data available to individual schools and their community partners to drive agency decision-making.
   - Disaggregate attendance data by key demographic and educational categories.
   - Address all absences, including those that are excused and unexcused.
   - Set yearly concrete, measurable, and well-publicized attendance goals by school and by district.
   - Record the reason(s) for student absences, so that appropriate school and support staff can address their underlying causes.
   - Build an individualized early-warning system that uses multiple measures of attendance and suspensions.
   - Require school sites to review data daily and weekly to identify students with needs and provide them with appropriate interventions.
   - If the early-warning system is triggered, school attendance office staff immediately respond by, for example, convening a Student Study Team meeting or a meeting with the student and parent at which the importance of attendance is shared and strategies and services are offered.

3. Reduce school-initiated exclusions.
   - Have zero tolerance for zero-tolerance policies.
   - Adopt district-wide positive behavior support plans and school-wide discipline plans that create alternatives to exclusions (see Discipline Foundation Policy School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Program in Appendix D for a link to the Los Angeles Unified School District’s PBIS plan).
   - Ensure that the school’s discipline code requires that initial interventions be made prior to suspensions for minor offenses, that it restricts the use of suspensions for -defi-
ance/disruption,” and that it promotes affirmatively teaching positive behavior and providing pro-social behavior lessons to students who violate school rules.

- Set clear and ambitious goals by school and by district for reducing suspensions and expulsions across the board and for particular subgroups, such as African-Americans, who are disproportionally suspended and expelled.
- Inform the juvenile court, youth-serving county departments, and advocates prior to student expulsions, suspensions, or opportunity transfers.
- Use the juvenile court’s 317e Panel for alternative solutions.
- Cease end-of-the-year —pushouts” or –force-outs.”

4. **Partner with families early and often.**

   - Invite family participation early on by making person-to-person contact on the same day of an absence or tardy, and explain how attendance is tied to successful outcomes such as high school graduation and employment.
   - Adopt problem-solving strategies for students who are chronically absent, and work closely with parents to alleviate the reasons behind their child’s poor attendance (for example, absences due to asthma or other chronic medical conditions).
   - Find ways to honor and reward parents for their child’s good attendance in pre-school through the eighth grade.
   - Create a structured parent education program that is continuously offered to all parents, especially those who have students with attendance issues. This program should:
     - Offer parents specific suggestions on how to support their children in school and get involved in their education (see Appendix F for background materials on the Alhambra Unified School District’s Parent University and its Incredible Years program).
     - Ensure that these suggestions are ―doable” for all parents, particularly for those who may have struggled in school themselves.
     - Educate parents about the basic things they can do to establish a school-going culture in their home, such as annual health and dental check-ups, an adequate night’s sleep, morning routines that allow enough time for travel and breakfast, etc.
   - Include questions on parent surveys about attendance, such as when and why it is difficult to get their children to school and how schools can help.

5. **Create a communication/media campaign regarding the importance of attendance.**

   - Make the first-day-of-school enrollment and regular attendance during the first two weeks of school a top priority for schools, city government, county and city agencies, and community organizations and partners.
   - Communicate frequently with parents and families about the importance of regular and on-time attendance and use a variety of messengers, languages, and formats to ensure that these messages are heard and reinforced.
- Use positive, motivational messages for students, including stories that illustrate the advantages of staying in school.
- Identify corporate, media, cultural, and elected-official supporters to help carry positive and pro-active messages.

6. **Create a uniform system at each school site that focuses on prevention and intervention.**

- Prevention, intervention, and recovery should be the focus, rather than punishment and legal intervention.
- Immediately identify at-risk and truant youth, refer them for a comprehensive assessment, and provide a continuum of services for assisting them.
- Develop an individualized, comprehensive plan for students with the most intense needs, which includes incentives, prevention, intervention, and credit-recovery strategies and services, relationship-building, case management, and other tools that address the root causes of truancy.
- Ensure that school counselors and staff are trained to provide daily supports and interventions to students with attendance concerns.

7. **Maximize partnerships to ensure a range of services that address the root causes of truancy.**

- Partner with the county Departments of Health, Public Health, and Mental Health, along with community and faith-based organizations, to publicize available services, stress their importance, create a network of services, and address parental concerns.
- Maximize health partnerships to ensure that students receive annual health, dental, and vision examinations and appropriate mental health services.
- Increase the use of holistic wellness centers on school campuses, such as those established at Washington Prep and Fremont High Schools.
- Create more partnerships between government agencies to deliver integrated services on school campuses, such as the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program model through which social workers are outstationed on campuses to create and implement education plans for foster youth.

8. **Focus on high-need populations, schools, grades, and times of year.**

- Develop an indicator showing the number of school years during which a student has been chronically absent, include this indicator on key school reports, and focus attendance efforts on children with multiple periods of chronic absence.
- Ensure that school-based health staff use attendance and chronic-absence data to target their outreach and prioritize services and follow-up care for dental, nutrition, asthma, mental health, or other health needs.
- Encourage schools with poor attendance to budget for a full-time, dedicated attendance monitor, and make attendance the first priority of their school improvement plan.
Focus on attendance in key transition grades—kindergarten, first, fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth (depending on elementary and middle school feeder patterns)—and provide additional attention and interventions in these grades.

Partner with and help train early childhood organizations, such as Head Start, Zero to Three, and LAUP, to emphasize the importance of pre-K and kindergarten attendance.

Encourage schools to use student mobility as a trigger for additional academic and support services, and to pay special attention to the attendance of highly mobile students, such as homeless youth and youth in foster care.

9. **Utilize rewards and attendance incentives at the individual student, class, grade and school levels.**

   - Adopt a ratio of four incentives (for example, public recognition for improved attendance, gift certificates for perfect attendance, daily praise for student attendance, bonus points) to each single consequence to align with research findings on behavior change and effective attendance and student engagement initiatives.
   - Require every school to have monthly attendance incentives and publicize positive attendance.
   - Provide "high-value” incentives for the highest-attending students and schools.

10. **Provide training to all school staff.**

    - Provide training on school attendance policies, procedures, and responsibilities to all staff who affect attendance, and hold staff accountable for following them.
    - Ensure that attendance-office and other key school staff are trained to recognize and help highly mobile, homeless, or foster-care students stay enrolled in their current schools, to expedite enrollment changes when necessary, and to provide material supports and encouragement to enable regular attendance.
    - Provide professional development for principals and teachers to help them improve attendance.
    - Provide school-wide cross-training that emphasizes the importance of a welcoming and supportive climate, progressive discipline, and regular staff attendance.

11. **Address transportation and safety barriers so it is easier, safer, and quicker to get to school.**

    - Provide easier and more frequent opportunities for parents and students to give feedback about transportation (public transit, for example) services and needs, such as adding a texting or on-line complaint hotline or some questions to an annual school survey.
    - Work with public transit systems to change schedules and stops to promote school attendance and timeliness.
    - Secure corporate and other sponsors to provide transit passes to students attending schools in low-income areas.
- Consider awarding different types of transit passes to students, varying the time, allowable routes, and number of rides depending upon the student’s age, prior attendance, and school performance. This could include awarding unrestricted daily bus passes to very high-attending/performing high school students.

- Develop more community watch, safe passage, and other programs that involve teachers, school staff, city government, community and faith-based organizations, parents, and family members in efforts to protect students on their way to and from school.

- Solicit funding for a transportation system review to investigate creating alternative bus systems, such as the network of mini-buses and hub-and-spoke system developed in Denver.

- Implement a transportation texting campaign to gather more current information regarding public transportation service, and investigate the demand for and the cost of providing yellow-bus service for the (few) sixth-grade students who have to transfer.

12. **Increase the role of the youth voice in schools and learn from youth how to improve attendance.**

- Establish forums, suggestion boxes, and listening tours to hear from students about what would help them get to school regularly and on time, and what would make them engage in their classes.

- Involve students in the planning of transition plans, IEPs, school course selections, middle and high school choices, and so on.

- Ensure that an established student-governance structure exists at secondary schools.

- Expand student school climate surveys to solicit suggestions about desired services, classes, and activities, and add a “What would make it more likely that you would come to school regularly?” question.

13. **Integrate the SARB process with the broader attendance initiative and utilize SARB referrals only after documented interventions have not worked and only in connection with mental health and other resource-based strategies.**

14. **Refer truancy issues to law-enforcement agencies only as a last resort, and only if school staff can document multiple failed interventions.**

**Juvenile Court**

1. **Collect and regularly publish data** regarding the number of minors who appear in court for daytime curfew citations, dispositions related to such appearances, and the age, race, ethnicity, and gender of the minors cited.

2. **Reform the Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court process to focus on solutions and supports rather than fines and court appearances.**

   - Students who preemptively engage in community and resource-based programs should be able to submit proof of participation to the court and obtain a dismissal without a court appearance, to avoid court involvement and missing time in school.
• Young people, including those over 18, who cannot afford to pay existing fines should be given an opportunity to provide proof of graduation from high school, a GED, or engagement in a community program or community service to eliminate the fines.
• Dismiss citations for youth who can show that they are on the way to school or on school grounds at the time of the citation.
• Focus on directing students to community-based services and resources and eliminate the use of fines.
• Provide a packet of information to youth and families (in English and Spanish) that includes a revised statement of legal rights, a notice of the charge and defenses, and a survey of interventions and supports they have received in relation to truancy.
• Ensure that court referees explain to every student that they have a right to a hearing before asking whether the student admits guilt.
• Ensure that each hearing is recorded, if not transcribed, and that rights are explained consistently and accurately to the students and families to ensure that students’ due-process rights are protected.
• Ensure a written decision explaining the factual bases for the finding that the student violated LAMC 45.04, finding that none of the valid exceptions in LAMC 45.04(b) apply, finding that the citing police officer complied with 45.04(c) before issuing the citation, and acknowledging all arguments the student provided as to why the ticket should be dismissed.
• Ensure that court referees explain the right to appeal, and timelines for doing so, if the student contests guilt and is found guilty.

3. **Ensure that judicial officers engage youth and parents in order to understand the root causes of truancy.**

• Judicial officers should receive training regarding the variety of underlying causes for truancy, including academic struggles, negative school environments, safety issues, health concerns, and chaotic homes.
• Court policies and actions should:
  ✓ Focus on the root causes for attendance issues
  ✓ Encourage targeted interventions that promote engagement in school
  ✓ Recognize that a sole focus on the behavior itself can unintentionally cause more harm than good by increasing a student’s exclusion from school

4. **Help ensure education stability.**

• The court should be made aware immediately of any proposed change in school for youth under its jurisdiction and the reasons for the proposal.
• Proposed school changes should be carefully evaluated so as to minimize disruption and loss of credits.
• Court actions should, whenever possible, promote the student’s engagement in their current school, unless that is not in the youth’s best interests.
5. **Document absences.**

- All reports to the dependency and delinquency courts should document that the social worker or probation officer has monitored the student’s school attendance and, if the student exhibits a significant absence problem (for example, 10 percent or more unexcused school days within a period of at least 60 days, or 20 percent or more of a combination of unexcused/excused school days within that same period), that the social worker or probation officer has attempted to schedule a meeting with the student and relevant school staff to discuss the attendance issue and create an attendance plan.

- If students have attendance issues, judicial officers should craft orders to ensure that the social worker or probation officer works with the student and the school to identify the underlying issues leading to the attendance problem and address them through effective interventions and supports. In dealing with youth with attendance issues, courts should:
  - Determine and address the root causes of unexcused absences, such as any health issues of the youth or family members, real or perceived safety issues at school or in transit, the level of family support for educational values, peer influence, and substance abuse by the youth or family members.
  - Ask social workers and probation officers what steps they have taken to address truancy and ensure that the youth attends school.
  - Refer youth to a 317(e) education panel of attorneys for follow-up action and advocacy to enforce the child’s legal rights, where appropriate.
  - Assist in expanding needed services and supports and youth connections to them.
  - Ensure that youth with truancy issues are brought to court at a time that minimally interferes with school classes.
  - Ensure that incarceration is never used as a sanction for poor attendance.

- The court should see that the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department develop policy directives to ensure that judicial officers receive the information specified in this recommendation.

**Law Enforcement**

1. **Collect and make public data regarding the number of minors cited** by city police departments, school police, and the Sheriff’s Department for daytime curfew offenses, along with the location and time of the citation and the age, ethnicity, race, and gender of the minors cited.

2. **Ensure that the primary focus in dealing with truant youth is getting students back to school** and engaged in positive activity linked to community resources.

3. **Expand programs that connect at-risk youth with mentoring and other services.**

4. **Develop protocols for dealing with truant youth that are different from traditional delinquency enforcement models.**

5. **Include local prosecutors** in developing a strategies related to truancy prosecution and enforcement.
6. **Develop information-sharing protocols among prosecutors’ offices** so that students are adequately tracked and protected when they do not attend school.

7. **Improve interagency data-sharing** so that school districts and city and county agencies have as much information as possible before making decisions that will affect specific youth.

**Municipalities**

1. **Reflect current evidence-based research and proven best practices in ordinances on daytime curfew violations.** Specifically, these ordinances should:
   - Not be applied to public sidewalks immediately adjacent to school grounds or school entrances
   - Apply only to young people who are intentionally avoiding school, or are loitering in public places at times when they are required to be in school
   - Not apply to young people going directly to or returning directly home from a public meeting or a school sporting event, dance, or activity
   - Not apply to a young person who is traveling on his or her way to school, regardless of tardiness
   - Not result in a court-imposed penalty if the police officer does not document that he or she assessed whether one of the statutory exceptions apply before issuing the citation
   - Not be punishable by a fine, but rather direct students to participate in a community or school resource-based program, such as a tutoring, mentoring, credit recovery, after-school program, or a teen or peer court program

2. **Require the collection and regular publication of data from law enforcement entities enforcing curfew statutes regarding the number of minors cited for daytime curfew offenses, along with the location and time of the citation and the age, ethnicity, race, and gender of the minors cited.**

3. **Coordinate with local school districts so that city-funded services such as tutoring, mentoring, and other youth development programming are targeted to students who are most in need of the services.**

**Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers**

Parents, guardians and caregivers play a critical role in ensuring that their children are consistently and regularly in school. Unfortunately, particularly in lower-income communities and communities of color, schools often perceive parents as part of the problem instead of part of the solution. In addition to the recommendations for schools regarding engaging and partnering with parents as equals, parents, guardians, and caregivers should:

1. **Seek out and advocate for leadership roles in their schools** to strategize about how to improve students.

2. **Create safe places and parent groups** to help other parents struggling with a child or children who have school-avoidance behaviors.
3. Advocate for schools to create strong policies supporting parents in getting their students to school regularly and on time.

4. Demand that schools move away from approaches that criminalize students or result in school-imposed exclusions.

5. Advocate for processes in schools where trained teams and parents work together to understand and address the root causes of truancy.

6. Ensure that school policies and practices require that parents be contacted immediately at the first sign of an attendance issue.

7. Seek out information and training from school and other community agencies if they are having a hard time getting their child to school on time.

8. Demand to be included as equal partners in the dialogue around solving school-attendance issues.

Communities

Community, faith-based, and business groups have much to offer in terms of resources and supports to help address school attendance issues. Too often, the community is not included as an equal partner in solving these issues and its resources are undervalued. In hard economic times like these, it is critical to leverage existing community resources and create a web of support for students struggling in school. Moreover, community organizations work directly with youth and their families before and after school, and they have critical insights into the needs and barriers to school access and engagement.

In developing an integrated system to support school attendance, community organizations and businesses should:

1. Be informed about and involved in developing and shaping policies around school attendance

2. Be engaged as partners, allies, and resources by school districts, individual schools, the courts, and law enforcement agencies

3. Come together around the schools, children, and families in their neighborhoods to offer services, housing, after-school programs, and support to prevent truancy and address its root causes

4. Offer resources—intervention workers, transportation, technology—to create safe passages and to respond when a young person is faced with a dangerous situation

5. Be willing to partner and pool resources with other community organizations in the county to create a web of services in the community and on school campuses to address students’ academic, social-emotional, and physical health needs

6. Come forward to provide alternative school models that are flexible and meet youth’s needs, such as Big Picture Learning (discussed on page 10)
7. **Provide positive adult and peer relationships**—whether with a family member, teacher, or mentor—as a key to reaching students, addressing their needs, holding them accountable, and motivating them to attend school.

8. **Create resource directories** such as the Healthy Cities database to ensure that schools and courts can quickly and easily connect families with services.
Conclusion

The School Attendance Task Force has identified some priority areas and specific actions to focus on during 2012 to foster or implement these recommendations.

❖ Task Force members have already committed to making some key policy changes:

- Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash is finalizing key reforms to the operation of the Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court (IJTC).
  - His first directive states that, at the youth’s option, community service will always be available in lieu of a monetary fine (including assessments and fees) for any offense adjudicated in the IJTC; the directive also lays out the implementation of that change.
  - A second directive issues guidelines for the IJTC’s handling of school attendance cases, and states that the court shall dismiss any citation for which the evidence shows the youth was late to school or en route to school.
  - A third directive addresses informing youth and parents of their rights in the IJTC.

- Los Angeles City Councilman Tony Cárdenas has proposed an amendment to the City Municipal Code that directs daytime curfew enforcement to those students who are intentionally avoiding school or loitering in public spaces, and targets resource-based community and school interventions for those students instead of assessing fines from them.

- The City of Los Angeles Community Development Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District have agreed to work together to launch between eleven and thirteen new Youth WorkSource Centers to serve truant students and those who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school.

❖ As a whole, the Task Force will:

- Request that the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council (ECC) adopt this report at its February 2012 meeting. In addition, the ECC should ask its individual members to commit to addressing the recommendations that specifically pertain to them and report back on their activities and their progress throughout the year.

- Distribute an Executive Summary of this report, highlighting its findings and recommendations, to a variety of stakeholders at multiple levels through customized meetings, conference presentations and workshops, seminars, and media exposure. The full report will be posted on the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council website (www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org) as well as on the websites of other Task Force members, and electronic links to these sites and those of other key stakeholder agencies will be established.

- Identify and create meaningful tools (such as attendance plans) for judicial officers in the dependency and delinquency courts to use to directly address school attendance issues for the youth they supervise

- Explore options for securing free transit passes for school-aged youth, especially those residing in low-income communities or attending schools in these areas
- Develop a resource book or technical assistance guide to assist school districts in implementing the proposed recommendations for a comprehensive attendance program
- Continue to collect information on successful policies, practices, and models to help increase student attendance in Los Angeles County

- Task Force work groups will be established to:
  - Investigate ways to improve interagency sharing of student attendance data
  - Develop ideas for a countywide public service announcement campaign that markets the importance of school attendance
  - Create strategies for increasing connections between school districts and available community resources
## Appendix A  Truancy in the Education and Penal Codes

### Appendix Table A-1. Summary of Truancy Offenses, Elements, and Punishments as Provided for in the Education and Penal Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statute</th>
<th>Level of Offense</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Elements of the Offense</th>
<th>Punishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Code §48264.5/Petition is brought against a juvenile pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code §601</td>
<td>Infraction</td>
<td>Juvenile</td>
<td>Fourth-time truancy within a single school year for the minor pupil. This means that the previous three truancies and the notice provisions must be proven. See Education Code §48264.5 (a-c)</td>
<td>One or more of the following: Community service of 20 to 40 hours lasting not more than 90 days. A one-hundred dollar fine that the parent is jointly and severally liable for. Attendance in a court approved truancy prevention program. Suspension or revocation of driving privileges pursuant to Vehicle Code §13202.7 when the student has been to SARB or truancy mediation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Complaint Against Student</td>
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This statute is aimed solely at juveniles. Before it can be used, the minor pupil must have exhausted all the remedies as to the first three truancies. See Education Code §48264.5 (a-c).

The SARB can refer the minor pupil for truancy mediation or for filing as can the Truancy Mediator. See Welfare and Institutions Code §601.3 and 601.4.

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21 Daytime truancy tickets are dealt with under local municipal codes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statute</th>
<th>Level of Offense</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Elements of the Offense</th>
<th>Punishment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education Code §48291/48293</td>
<td>Infraction</td>
<td>Adult or Juvenile pursuant to Education Code §49295 and Welfare and Institutions Code §601.4</td>
<td>Parent or guardian fails to send their child to school. Parent or guardian continually and willfully fails to respond to directives of the SARB or a service provider that the SARB directs the parent to go to for services.</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Conviction—$100 fine 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Conviction—$250 fine 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; conviction—$500 fine or attendance at a parent education and counseling program. Note that the parent cannot be imprisoned as a punishment for the contempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SARB refers the parent for filing.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Code §48453/48454</td>
<td>Misdemeanor</td>
<td>Adult Criminal Court</td>
<td>Parent or guardian fails to compel attendance of the minor.</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Conviction—$50 fine 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; and Subsequent Convictions—$50 to $500 fine and/or 5 to 25 days in county jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Complaint Against Parent Having Control of a Minor Attending Special Continuation Education Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school district refers the parent for filing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The SARB refers the parent for filing.</strong></td>
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| Penal Code §272(a)  Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor  

*Note that this statute does not require that the minor actually be filed upon under a Welfare and Institutions Code §601 petition; it requires only that the action or the omission of action would tend to bring the minor within the provisions of Welfare and Institutions Code §601.* | Misdemeanor  
Adult Criminal Court | The parent or legal guardian shall have duty to exercise reasonable care, supervision, protection, and control of a child under the age of 18.  
They must omit to act or act in a manner that would cause or encourage the minor to come within the provisions of Welfare and Institutions Code §601.  
—or would cause or manifestly tend to cause the minor to remain a person within the provisions of Welfare and Institutions Code §601. | $2,500 fine  
*and/or* one year imprisonment in the county jail |
| Penal Code §270.1—Becomes operative on January 1, 2011  
Parent or Guardian of a Chronic Truant  
The courts have not yet created a deferred entry of judgment program.  
Prosecutors should note that school districts within a single county and within the state have different amounts of instructional days. This could result in an inequitable application of this statute. | Misdemeanor  
Adult Criminal Court | A parent or guardian of a pupil of six years of age or more who is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8.  
Student is subject to compulsory full-time education or compulsory continuation education.  
Pupil is a chronic truant as defined in §48263.6 of the Education Code.  
Has failed to reasonably supervise and encourage the pupil's school attendance.  
Has been offered language-accessible support services to address the pupil's truancy | $2,000 fine  
*and/or* one year imprisonment in county jail  
*or* a court-created deferred entry of judgment program  
The statute specifies that the defendant cannot be punished under both 270.1 and 272. |
Appendix B  Daytime Curfew Directives

Los Angeles Police Department

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

NOTICE
14.5

TO: All Department Personnel

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: ENFORCEMENT OF DAYTIME CURFEW AND ACTIVATION OF THE CURFEW ORDINANCE (DAYTIME AND NIGHTTIME) GUIDELINES

EFFECTIVE: IMMEDIATELY

The purpose of this Notice is to clarify the objective, scope and application of Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 45.04 – Daytime Curfew and to activate The Curfew Ordinance (Daytime and Nighttime) Guidelines. When properly enforced, LAMC Section 45.04 is an effective tool for reducing the likelihood of juveniles being victims of or involved in crimes. The proper application of the ordinance is directed toward juveniles who are intentionally avoiding school, or are loitering in public places at times when they are required to be in school.

Officers must consider the spirit of the intended application of the Daytime Curfew ordinance prior to taking enforcement action. In addition, officers must understand and adhere to the numerous exceptions which allow juveniles to be in public during school hours without violating the ordinance. Students who are making a good faith effort to get to school, regardless of their tardiness, generally should not be subject to enforcement.

Although the majority of Daytime Curfew citations are issued well after the juvenile is required to be in school, officers are reminded that they must inquire whether the student has a valid excuse (outlined in the ordinance) for being in a public place during a time when they are required to be in school. Additionally, officers must fully articulate the proper justification in the narrative portion of the Traffic Notice to Appear, Form 04.50.00, to support the officer’s determination that the subject is in violation of the ordinance.

Whenever feasible, officers who encounter juveniles during school hours should return the child to their school. Additionally, officers are required by ordinance to conduct an investigation. However, not all such contacts/investigations should result in the issuance of a citation. Section 45.04 (c) states:

Before taking any action to enforce the provisions of this section, police officers shall ask the apparent offender’s age and reason for being in the public place during curfew hours.
All Department Personnel
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The officer shall not issue a citation or make an arrest under this section unless the officer reasonably believes that an offense has occurred and that, based on any responses and other circumstances, no exceptions to this section apply.

Any student with a valid exception and/or a parental note authorizing their presence in a public place should be allowed to continue on their way.

If the student states that he/she is traveling to school or a destination covered by the exceptions to the ordinance, appears to be heading toward their school, but does not have a parental note authorizing their absence or tardiness, the issuance of a citation for Daytime Curfew may not be warranted. Prior to issuing Daytime Curfew citations to juveniles who are near their school campus (generally within a three-block radius), officers should return the student to the school's administrative office. After consultation with school staff, the officers may determine that the issuance of a citation for the violation of Daytime Curfew is appropriate.

Officers shall not enforce Daytime Curfew violations on school grounds; LAMC 45.04 is enforceable only at any place that is open to the public.

Prior to the implementation of a Daytime Curfew Task Force (DCTF) operation, the involved supervisor should consult with the Area commanding officer (C/O) regarding the purpose for the operation, the targeted boundaries, and the proper instructions to be provided to the involved officers. The Area C/O should verify the location, crime patterns, and crime time periods prior to granting approval for a DCTF. A review of this Notice should be conducted by all personnel involved in any DCTF. Daytime Curfew Task Force operations should generally not begin during the first hour that a school within the targeted boundaries is in session.

It is important to note that nothing in this Notice is intended to preclude an officer from enforcing LAMC Section 45.04; however, enforcement must be reasonable and fair, and the investigation must be clearly articulated in the narrative and should include a record of the time of the initial encounter in addition to all of the other pertinent information. When necessary, the use of the Continuation of Notice to Appear, Form 04.50.05, should be utilized to include any pertinent information that would assist the officer in recalling sufficient facts related to their investigation and their ability to testify in court.

SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES. Supervisors shall assess each Daytime Curfew citation to ensure strict compliance with approved procedures and the provisions of the law. A supervisor who identifies an error or omission on the citation shall:

* Withhold the original citation and obtain a Notice of Correction and Proof of Service, Form 04.07.00, from the citing employee;
* Review and approve the completed Notice of Correction and Proof of Service form in accordance with Department Manual Section 4/320.80; and,
All Department Personnel
Page 3
14.5

Ensure that the Notice of Correction and Proof of Service is stapled to the lower left corner of the citation, above the original citation, and forwarded in accordance with Department Manual Section 3/202.70.

Juvenile Division has created a procedural guide on curfew enforcement to assist officers in daytime and nighttime curfew investigations. The Curfew Ordinance (Daytime and Nighttime) Guidelines is located on the Local Area Network (LAN) in the Guides link within the Reference Library link.

All concerned bureau commanding officers shall be responsible for monitoring compliance with this Notice in accordance with Department Manual Section 0/080.30. Additionally, Office of Operations will implement a monitoring plan for the first year of implementation to conduct a quarterly review of the data on citations for compliance with this Notice.

Any questions regarding this Notice may be directed to Lieutenant II Alfred Pasos, Officer in Charge, Evaluation and Administration Section, Office of Operations, at (213) 486-6055.

CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

Attachment

DISTRIBUTION “D”
DAYTIME CURFEW ORDINANCE EXCEPTIONS

* The minor is accompanied by his/her parent, guardian, other adult person authorized by the parent or guardian having the care or custody of the minor; or,
* The minor is on an emergency errand directed by his/her parent, guardian or adult person having the care or custody of the minor; or,
* The minor is going directly to or coming directly from their place of gainful employment; or,
* The minor is going directly to or coming directly from a medical appointment; or,
* The minor has permission to leave campus for lunch and has in his/her possession a valid, school-issued off campus permit; or,
* The presence of the minor in one or more of the places identified in Subsection (a) is connected with or required with respect to a business, trade, profession or occupation in which the minor is lawfully engaged; or,
* The minor is involved in an emergency such as fire, natural disaster, automobile accident, a situation requiring immediate action to prevent serious bodily injury or loss of life, or any unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state, which calls for immediate action; or,
* The minor is in a motor vehicle involved in interstate travel; or,
* The minor is authorized to be absent from his/her school pursuant to the provisions of California Education Code Section 48205, or any other applicable state or federal law.
Los Angeles School Police Department

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE
Los Angeles School Police Department

NOTICE- 11-04

October 19, 2011

TO: All Department Personnel
FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: ENFORCEMENT OF DAYTIME CURFEW LAWS – REVISED

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Notice is to clarify the objective, scope and application of Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 45.04 – Daytime Curfew restrictions for Minors, and the application of daytime curfew (truancy) enforcement District-wide for Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD) sworn personnel. This Notice also reinforces the LASPD’s commitment to support the Superintendent’s goals of attendance and graduation improvement, and reduce the cycle of student “push out.”

LAMC Section 45.04 is intended to be a tool to reduce the likelihood of minors being victims of/or involved in crimes. Officers must consider the spirit of the intended application of the Daytime Curfew ordinances prior to taking enforcement action. In addition, officers must be familiar with and adhere to the numerous exceptions which allow minor students to be in public during school hours without violating the ordinance. These exceptions are listed in Appendix A of this Notice.

The proper application of the ordinance is for minor students who are either intentionally avoiding school or loitering in public places at times when they are required to be in school. Unless one of the above-mentioned elements is present at the time the officer has encountered the minor, generally, the minor should not be subject to a citation or an arrest for truancy if truancy is the only offense.

Any minor student who has a school schedule that does not require him or her to be in school at the time of the encounter shall not be cited, as the daytime curfew applies only “during the hours of the day when the school, which the minor would normally attend, is in session, on days when that school is in session.” Further, officers shall not issue citations to students who are age 18 or older, even if they are enrolled in school.

Officers are reminded that they must inquire whether the student has a valid excuse for tardiness or absence as delineated in Appendix A. Should a citation be warranted, officers should articulate the justification for the citation in the narrative portion of the citation, (i.e., “Subject did not meet any valid excuse exceptions and was loitering inside a food establishment two hours after scheduled school start”).
ENFORCEMENT OF DAYTIME CURFEW LAWS – REVISED
Page 2

PROCEDURE: Whenever feasible, officers who encounter students off campus during school hours should cause the facilitation of the minor student’s return to his/her school.

- Officers shall, before taking action to enforce the provisions of the Daytime Curfew laws, ask the student’s age and reason for being in the public place during curfew hours. The officer shall make a reasonable attempt to confirm the student’s explanation regarding enrollment by contacting the school and/or parent/guardian.

- Officers shall not issue a citation or make an arrest under this section unless the officer reasonably believes that an offense has occurred and no exceptions listed in Appendix A of this Notice apply.

- Officers shall not enforce the Daytime Curfew on school grounds or at school entrances, as the language of the daytime curfew laws indicate that the statute is enforceable only when a student is absent from school, unsupervised, at any place which is open to the public. LAUSD campuses, during school hours, are NOT considered “open to the public” as supported by enforceable “No trespassing” laws.

- Generally, officers shall not enforce the Daytime Curfew directly adjacent to the school grounds and within the “Safe School Zone” perimeter unless the officer has reasonable suspicion, based on specific and articulable facts, that the student is in violation of another law or ordinance.

If the student states that he/she is traveling to school or a destination covered by the exceptions to the ordinance or procedures in this Notice and also appears to be heading toward their school or legitimate destination cited in Appendix A, but does not have a parental consent, the issuance of the citation is generally not warranted. Minor students with a valid exception as outlined in Appendix A, and/or possess a valid parental note authorizing their presence in a public place should be allowed to continue on their way.

Officers may utilize reasonable means, including, but not limited to, temporary detentions, to verify the validity of an excused absence.

If there are factors other than the actual or suspected violation of Daytime Curfew ordinances that cause the officer to believe officer safety may be threatened or the minor is in possession of contraband, the officer should follow the requisite Department policy and procedures governing protective frisks, the use of handcuffs or physical restraints, and searches.

Daytime Curfew Task Forces

Generally, LASPD should not conduct spontaneous Daytime Curfew Task Forces (DCTF). Should a DCTF be warranted, prior approval SHALL be obtained from a commanding officer.
ENFORCEMENT OF DAYTIME CURFEW LAWS – REVISED
Page 3

The scope and purpose of the operation and the targeted boundaries shall be documented on an Employee’s Report (15.7), addressed to the Commanding Officer of the Division in which the task force will occur. The Division Commanding Officer within the identified target area should verify crime patterns and crime time periods prior to granting approval of a DCTF. Daytime Curfew Task Force operations should generally not begin during the first 90 minutes that the involved school is in session.

Note: A Task Force is defined as the utilization of extraordinary resources above normal deployment, with or without other law enforcement agencies participation, for the purpose of targeting specific statute violations due to complained of or conspicuous criminal activity.

The Commanding Officer, Field Services Bureau, shall be responsible for monitoring compliance with this Notice. Additionally, the Office of the Chief of Police will implement a monitoring plan for the first year of implementation to review the data on citations quarterly for compliance with this Notice.

Any questions regarding this Correspondence should be directed to the Office of the Chief of Police.

[Signature]

STEVEN K. ZIPPERMAN
Chief of Police

Attachment
APPENDIX A - DAYTIME CURFEW ORDINANCE EXCEPTIONS

- LAMC section 45.04 (b)

- The minor is accompanied by his/her parent, guardian, other adult person authorized by the parent or guardian having the care or custody of the minor; or,

- The minor is on an emergency errand directed by his/her parent, guardian or adult person having the care or custody of the minor; or,

- The minor is going directly to or coming directly from their place of gainful employment; or,

- The minor is going directly to or coming directly from a medical appointment; or,

- The minor has permission to leave campus for lunch and has in his/her possession a valid, school-issued off campus permit; or,

- The presence of the minor in one or more of the places identified in Subsection (a) is connected with or required with respect to a business, trade, profession or occupation in which the minor is lawfully engaged; or,

- The minor is involved in an emergency such as fire, natural disaster, automobile accident, a situation requiring immediate action to prevent serious bodily injury or loss of life, or any unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state, which calls for immediate action; or,

- The minor is in a motor vehicle involved in interstate travel; or,

- The minor is authorized to be absent from his/her school pursuant to the provisions of California Education Code Section 48205, or any other applicable state or federal law.
Appendix C  Councilmember Cárdenas Motion

MOTION

PUBLIC SAFETY

During the past two years, the Los Angeles City Council in conjunction with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), as well as the courts and various other regional government agencies and community groups, including Public Counsel, ACLU of Southern California and the Community Rights Campaign have been collaborating with the LAPD to revise existing LAPD procedures aimed at reducing the number of daytime curfew tickets written to students, particularly African American and Latino students.

According to the LAPD and the Los Angeles School Police statistics, police issued more than 47,000 tickets from 2004 to 2009 - 88% of them to African American and Latino students, who make up only 74% of Los Angeles students. With curfew fines often times costing more than $240 and requiring students and their families to miss additional time from school and work to go to court to resolve them, in addition to schools losing Average Daily Attendance (ADA) state revenue from students missing school to attend court hearing, revising Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 45.04, which imposes a daytime curfew on youth under the age of 18, would substantially increase school attendance and prevent a considerable number of students from entering into the juvenile justice system.

Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 45.04 states that “it is unlawful for any minor ... to be present in or upon the public streets, highways, roads, alleys, parks, playgrounds, or other public grounds, public places, public buildings, places of amusement and eating places, vacant lots or any place open to the public during the hours of the day when the school ... is in session ...” As a result of the collaboration between the LAPD, City Council and the community, in April of this year, the LAPD issued an internal directive that directed LAPD ticket task forces to generally not cite students during the first hour of classes, directs police to help students get back to school rather than ticketing them, and makes other changes to ensure that students stay in school and acquire an education.

Given the fact that there are dozens of reasons why students are late or truant, ranging from emotional and mental health problems, school environment, academic challenges, special education needs, economic pressures, substance abuse, physical or emotional abuse in the home, and lack of adequate transportation, revising and/or ending LAMC Section 45.04 would further remove financial hardships on families and help students obtain the education and guidance necessary to become productive residents of Los Angeles. In light of the most recent research confirming that students who appear in juvenile court are almost four times as likely to drop out of school – which is associated with a number of negative outcomes, including unemployment and increased criminal involvement – minimizing court involvement of youth by instead connecting them to resources will substantially benefit the students, the community and the City.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles Police Department, with the assistance of the City Attorney, be instructed to report to the City Council on amending, as underlined and struck through on the following pages, Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 45.04 within the next 60 days.

PRESENTED BY:  
TONY CARDENAS  
Councilmember, 6th District

SECONDED BY:  

SEP 16, 2012
SEC. 45.04. DAYTIME CURFEW RESTRICTIONS FOR MINORS.

(Title and Section Amended by Ord. No. 180,173, Eff. 10/5/08.)

(a) Curfew. It is unlawful for any minor under the age of 18, who is subject to compulsory education or to compulsory continuation education, alone or in concert with others, to be present in or upon the public streets, highways, roads, alleys, parks, playgrounds, or other public grounds, public places, public buildings, places or amusement and eating places, vacant lots or any place open to the public during the hours of the day when the school, which the minor would normally attend, is in session, on days when that school is in session. This section does not apply to public sidewalks immediately adjacent to school grounds, school entrances to school grounds, or school grounds. This section is intended to apply only to minors who are intentionally avoiding school, or are loitering in public places at times when they are required to be in school.

(b) Exceptions. The provisions of this section shall not apply when:

1. The minor is accompanied by his or her parent, guardian, other adult person authorized by the parent or guardian having the care or custody of the minor, or

2. The minor is on an emergency errand directed by his or her parent, guardian or other adult person having the care or custody of the minor, or

3. The minor is attending or going directly to or returning directly home from a public meeting or a school sporting event, dance or activity, or

4. The minor is going directly to or coming directly from their place of gainful employment, or

5. The minor is going directly to or coming directly from a medical appointment, or

6. The minor has permission to leave campus for lunch and has in his or her possession a valid, school-issued off-campus permit, or

7. The presence of the minor in one or more of the places identified in Subsection (a) is connected with or required with respect to a business, trade, profession or occupation in which the minor is lawfully engaged; or

8. The minor is involved in an emergency such as a fire, natural disaster, automobile accident, a situation requiring immediate action to prevent serious bodily injury or loss of life, or any unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state, which calls for immediate action; or

9. The minor is in a motor vehicle involved in interstate travel; or

10. The minor is authorized to be absent from his or her school pursuant to the provisions of California Education Code Section 48205, or any other applicable state or federal law.

11. The minor is traveling on his or her way to school regardless of whether the minor is tardy for school. If the minor is cited within a 3 block radius of the school within the first 60 minutes of school, this establishes a rebuttable presumption that the minor is traveling on his or her way to school.
(c) **Enforcement.** Before taking any action to enforce the provisions of this section, police officers shall ask the apparent offenders age and reason for being in the public place during curfew hours. The officer shall not issue a citation or make an arrest under this section unless the officer reasonably believes that an offense has occurred, that the minor is required to be in school, and that, based on any responses and other circumstances, no exceptions to this section apply. The officer shall articulate the justification, identify the time when the officer first encountered the minor, and provide the minor's stated age in the description portion of the citation. The failure to assess whether one of the exceptions enumerated in subsection (b) applies or to complete the narrative portion is grounds for dismissal of the citation.

(d) **Violation.** Each violation of the provisions of this section shall constitute a separate offense and shall be an infraction unless the minor requests that a petition be filed under Section 601 and 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(e) **Penalties for Violation.** Any person convicted of willfully violating this ordinance is guilty of an infraction punishable by a fine not exceeding $250.00 and/or perform community service for a total time not to exceed 20 hours over a period not to exceed 30 days, during times other than his or her hours of school attendance or employment.

(d) **Penalties for Violation.** A violation of this section is an infraction. Notwithstanding any other section, a violation of this section shall not be punishable by a fine. For any citation issued under this section, the citation shall be dismissed, if prior to the scheduled court appearance date, the minor submits proof of participation in a community or school resource-based program, including but not limited to a tutoring, mentoring, credit recovery, or after-school program, or a Teen or Peer Court, if one is available. Any citation issued under this section shall specify the steps a minor may take to obtain a dismissal of the citation.

(e) **Data Collection.** The Los Angeles Police Department shall publish bi-annual statistics regarding the number of minors cited under this section, along with the location and time of the citation and the age, ethnicity, race and gender of the minors cited.

(f) **Severability of Provisions.** If any severable provision of this ordinance or any application thereof is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the ordinance which can be given effect notwithstanding such invalidity.
Improving Student Attendance in Los Angeles County

Appendix D Los Angeles Unified School District Programs

Three-Tiered Attendance Intervention Model

Strategies to Reduce Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

Our Goal is that at least 80% of all students attend school at a rate of 96% or better. The strategies to increase student attendance (and reduce truancy) are embedded in state laws and the District’s Attendance Policy and Procedures Manual. The strategic plan requires that District policies utilize the Attendance RtI² Model in order to ensure prevention, intervention and recovery efforts to increase in-seat attendance of all students at each school site.

Using the RtI² Framework for Attendance

Tier 1 or Universal Level is the support that is provided to all students.

Some examples of Universal Level interventions:

- Development of the Comprehensive Attendance and Dropout Prevention Plan
- Positive School Climate
- Attendance Incentives/Motivational Programs
- Establish Clear Attendance and Tardy Policy and Procedures
- Parent Notifications of Attendance Law
TIER II OR SELECTED LEVEL SUPPORT IS PROVIDED TO “AT-RISK” STUDENTS

Some examples of Selected Level interventions:

- Referrals to professionals (mental health, medical), and may include team planning and Coordination Of Services Teams (COST)
- District/City Attorney Truancy Prevention Programs, for example, the Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT) or the Safe Schools Division of the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office.
- Partnership with Los Angeles Police Department and LAUSD School Police
- Student Attendance Review Teams (SART)

TIER III OR TARGETED LEVEL IS THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO STUDENTS NEEDING “INTENSIVE” SERVICES AND INTERVENTION

Some examples of Targeted Level interventions:

- Intensive “case managed” supports
- Case management can be either a school based system or involve community based models/systems such as Wraparound Services, Department of Mental Health (DMH), Probation, Team Decision Making Meetings (TDM from the Department of Children and Family Services).
- Behavior Support Plans
- Referral to Student Attendance Review Board (SARB)
- Intensive coordination of actions/resources
- Alternative pathways to graduation
- Individualized action and monitoring plan that includes the student and family members.

Discipline Foundation Policy School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Program

http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,911578&_dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP
Appendix E  Task Force Meeting Schedule and Proceedings

September 20, 2010

There was a general discussion of current local efforts to prevent/reduce truancy and what seems to be working and what’s not.

- It was agreed that truancy is “the tip of the iceberg” that results from other problems and, therefore, a comprehensive approach is needed to properly address it. Also, different approaches are needed for different communities, for different causes of truancy, and for different age groups (elementary, middle and high schools).

- School engagement is key and there are some promising practices in place in some communities: LAUSD’s Washington Prep, the Pomona Project, school personnel mentoring youth, family support units, training parents as volunteer parent advocates that understand how to navigate the school system, teen courts.

- Civilian responses are also important—for example, community task forces, interns working on the streets of Philadelphia, safe passage programs, businesses opening their doors later in the morning (after school starts).

- Schools must tap into and collaborate with community resources, especially in dealing with special populations such as foster and probation youth.

- All of us must communicate with each other more effectively.

- While the task force is coming up with strategies for reducing truancy in the near future, we need to pay attention to what’s not working now, as these approaches are compounding the problem. Resources must be shifted and there must be increased accountability for interventions used.

- What’s not working well now: criminalizing truancy with citations, fines, etc., which results in youth missing even more school, parents missing work, and puts a financial burden on families which leads to more trouble (e.g., driver’s license suspensions) for not paying fines. Further, some neighborhoods (e.g., South LA, Boyle Heights, East SFV) are being targeted disproportionately with high numbers of citations. In some cases, youth are even being cited when walking TO school. Current approaches are generally “blunt instruments” that don’t differentiate well among different groups of truants and, therefore, don’t link truant youth to the right services.
December 1, 2010

This meeting focused on law enforcement approaches to dealing with truancy and presentations were made by:

- Earl Paysinger, Assistant Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department
- Tim Anderson, Interim Chief of the Los Angeles School Police Department
- Lydia Bodin, Deputy in Charge for the Los Angeles County District Attorney
- Kristen Byrdsong, Attorney-in-Charge for the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office

Paysinger observed that “truancy is not a crime”; however, teens commit 25% of the 86,000 property crimes committed annually and approximately 36% of these are committed during school hours. He doesn’t believe that citations, fines, or jail prevent truancy, as truancy is caused, in large part, by social and economic conditions and such factors as family structure. As “this is not a law enforcement problem,” LAPD is partnering with Public Counsel and others to find alternatives that decriminalize truancy.

Some promising ideas for the Task Force to consider include:

- Media marketing campaigns that deliver positive messages about staying in school. Ideally, these should include using social networking sites and their messaging capability to remind youth about attending school.
- Incentivizing school attendance through, for example, students being able to earn prizes such as Apple nanos or have special ringtones/wallpaper on their cell phones
- Providing incentives within schools
- Taking truant students to school-based or community resource centers or other diversionary programs

Anderson noted that, at the present time, there is a “limited tool belt” to deal with truancy and “the easy answer isn’t always the right answer.” Just taking students back to school isn’t working and more diversionary centers and programs are needed.

Bodin described the District Attorney’s successful Abolish Chronic Truancy program, which is reducing truancy by more than 50%, and the importance of focusing on young students, particularly those in elementary school. Byrdsong, whose office works primarily with middle school students, pointed out that what seems to be working is requiring parents to accompany their kids to school, because of the positive connections that are formed between parents and school personnel.

Councilman Cardenas emphasized that Chiefs Paysinger and Anderson observations that citations, fines and jail are not effectively reducing truancy are very important and need to be clearly communicated to school board, city and county policymakers.
February 7, 2011
School District approaches to truancy were the focus of this meeting and presentations were made by:

Debra Duardo, Director of Pupil Services, Los Angeles USD
Rick Tebbano, District-Wide Administrator for Child Welfare and Attendance for Long Beach USD
Laurel Bear, Director of Student Services, Alhambra USD

LAUSD is using a 3-Tiered Approach to improving school attendance that provides different sets of interventions matched to the level of school truancy as well as alternative education programs such as the Big Picture approach at its Frida Kahlo High School. The District has also launched a media campaign to market improved attendance for its students, which includes a component that makes parents more aware of the detrimental effect of truancy on their children’s well-being.

LBUSD used a host of strategies for addressing truancy and highlighted the District’s Truancy Counseling Center (TCC) program, which has been in existence for over 15 years. The TCCs serve students from all over the County and are divided into elementary, middle and high school levels, with teachers assigned to each Center. Recognizing that truancy is a symptom of other issues, efforts are made to engage parents when they come to pick up their youth from a TCC and then enroll them in parenting classes, counseling and other services.

AUSD, through a federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant awarded in 2008, launched its Gateway to Success program, which links District students with counselors or other health and wellness resources to help them with challenges that interfere with their academic, personal or social adjustment. A management team that includes the chief of police, city attorney, DCFS, Probation, DMH, SARB and others, oversees the program, and Parent and Student Advisory Committees play key roles. As a result, a host of reforms has been achieved, including an established consistency for truancy sweeps; a policy that merchants are not to serve students during school hours; a safety net of intervention services available to students when they return to school; a central process for all referrals; and the addition of university interns, including clinically trained psychologists, on every school campus. An innovative Parent University holds monthly workshops which, among other things, helps parents understand how to navigate the school system, what their students need to succeed, and how to prevent power struggles with their children. In addition, a local evaluation team is in place that is measuring the effects of a range of efforts, including anti-bullying campaigns, internet safety promotion, alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention, violence prevention, etc.

March 2, 2011
As a follow-up to the February meeting, Long Beach USD presented its SB 1317 PACT (Parent Accountability and Chronic Truancy) Program, a collaborative effort between the Long Beach Police Department, City Prosecutor and School District, and Alhambra USD presented recent data showing that school truancy, encouragingly, was cut in half between the 08–09 and 09–10 school years.
Community approaches were then considered and presentations were made by:

Daniel Oaxaca, Executive Director and Founder of the San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps (SGVCC) and staff member Andrew Quinones
Miller Sylvan, Regional Director, Attendance Improvement Management

At the heart of the SGVCC program is a YouthBuild Charter School. Students can earn credits while doing construction or project-based work that focuses on the environment, recycling, or the Earthworks Community Farm. Strong community partnerships have been developed with local cities and businesses to provide these opportunities. All students have an individualized education plan, and those who are 18 or older work towards completing their high school diploma while participating in job training programs, — earning, working, and getting paid at the same time.” The organization puts a heavy emphasis on involving their families in the school and, if a student is missing from school, staff go to their home and —knock on the door” to find out what is wrong. Last year, 42 students (out of the 100 aged 16–18) passed the CAHSEE exams and graduated, and almost all will go on to two or four-year colleges.

The AIM program helps students and their parents avoid court adjudication while recouping millions of dollars in attendance-related revenue. Currently in 14 school districts in 5 states, this program works to transform chronically truant youth by identifying the unique challenges that are the root cause of their truancy, providing intensive positive support, and making sure that every student is in school every day. Youth get wake-up calls every morning to remind them to go to school and are given hand-held monitors to receive and send text messages 5 times a day. Hired coaches contact their youth (1 for every 8 youth) 3–5 times weekly by phone, get involved in their lives and develop lasting relationships with their students. If a youth misses school, the coach knows immediately and talks with the youth that day. AIM began as a court-ordered program but has evolved into a broader program that provides a diversion from court and works closely with truancy sweep efforts and truancy centers. Its results are excellent, improving initial school attendance rates from 70 to 84% to 92–99% during the program, and to 88–95% afterwards.

April 4, 2011

This meeting included presentations by:

Andrew Glazier, Chief of Staff, City Year Los Angeles
Michael Gray, Chief, Kinship Support Division, Department of Children and Family Services; Jennifer Hottenroth, Director, Education & Mentoring; and Teresa Rupel, Program Manager, Skid Row Assessment Team

City Year has been operating in Los Angeles for the past 4 years. Its Corps members are from 17–24 years of age and receive an education award and a stipend for a year of full-time service. 95% act as in-class tutors and mentors for youth at-risk of dropping out of LAUSD schools and use a —whole school, whole child” framework. They also participate in an academically oriented after-school program and a weekend program. Most importantly, Corps members serve as consistent, caring, —near peer” adult role models in all of their interactions with students, a proven contributor to dropout prevention. Using LAUSD’s 3-Tier Model, City Year does some work with Tier 1 students, but primarily concentrates on those in Tier 2. City Year uses three data indicators to select students for program participation—Attendance (less than 90%), Behavior (—unsatisfactory” mark for behavior in at least one class) and Course Performance (final grade
of “F” in Math or English). By the end of the 2009–10 school year, 50% of City Year middle school students moved on track in English and 48% in Math.

There are currently 23,698 school-aged children under the supervision of DCFS—11,410 in elementary school, 3,110 in middle school and 8,551 in high school. 30% of these youth function below grade level; 50% are held back at least once; 46% do not complete high school; and only 15% enroll in college. Early identification of youth with truancy issues is the key to changing these statistics and, as there are numerous and complex reasons for youth truancy, DCFS is employing a variety of strategies for increasing school attendance, including intensive work with school districts. The Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program, for example, is a very successful partnership with 5 school districts that outstations social workers on high school campuses to spearhead the development and implementation of individual education plans through building strong relationships with schools, families and foster students.

No families with children are now living on Skid Row streets, as two nonprofit organizations are effectively meeting their needs. Therefore, truancy is no longer the problem it was on Skid Row in the early 2000’s. On any given night, however, between 30 and 80 homeless families are sleeping in missions. Project staff and their partners understand and continually communicate the message that all children, after a couple of days of homelessness, are expected to be in school. The two best resources for serving homeless children and their families are the 211 information line and DPSS eligibility workers, and McKinney-Vento (Homeless Children and Youth) Coordinators have been assigned in each school district.

**May 2, 2011**

This meeting included presentations by:

Kari Thierer, National Director of School and Network Support for Big Picture Learning
Stan Ricketts, Director, Camp to Community Transition Program, Probation Department

The Big Picture approach is being used in over 60 schools in 15 states and in a growing number of countries around the world. This program can be adapted to fit specific school districts and communities and can be put into any kind of school. Big Picture Learning starts by asking a student —where are your gaps” and —what are your strengths” and begins from there, even when the gap is social/emotional rather than academic. In this way, Big Picture —helps kids know themselves” and develop their own school curriculum. It is not workbook or chapter-focused, but based on what a youth needs to know and what that youth already knows. Big Picture focuses heavily on probation youth, and believes in educating one youth at a time and getting them out into the real world twice weekly through internships tied into each student’s academic program. Transition planning is key, especially in and out of camps.

Teachers are —advisors” and generalists who guide the same group of students (usually 15 to 18 per group) throughout their high school years. As a result, youth are part of a community and bring their whole selves to their group meetings. Each student also has a mentor outside of school and these mentors, as well as parents, are actively engaged as resources to the Big Picture Learning community. In short, —Big Picture takes care of truancy because, at their sites, kids want to go to school.”
Kari suggested that judicial officers take the time to dig deeper into why a student is truant and proposed some key questions that they should ask youth who are truant. She also proposed getting the youth, parent, teacher and judicial officer, as well as key players in the youth’s life (including the youth's ally or “someone who cares”), together in a non-threatening, youth-centered conference. Together, this group works with the youth to figure out a plan, as is being done, to various degrees, in SSTs, the Gloria Molina FYEP, with school-based DPOs, etc. and youth should be steered to compatible, supportive schools.

Probation currently has three initiatives addressing school truancy: (1) working with bus/MTA/Metro companies to align transportation pick-up times with school start times, and working with safety collaboratives to establish Safe School Zones designed to ensure safe passages to and from school. Pick-up and school start times have been successfully aligned and more safety collaboratives are now in place because, where they exist, crime has been reduced by 17%; (2) establishing increased penalties for crimes committed within 1000 feet of a school or within 500 feet of a bus stop; and (3) working with neighborhood vendors whose businesses are making youth tardy. There is often a 4 to 5 week delay in enrolling youth exiting camps into community-based schools, prompting the Department to focus more intensely on camp to community transitions. A pilot has been created involving 9 school districts, in which receiving districts are brought to the planning table 60 days before a camp youth is to be discharged.

June 6, 2011
This meeting focused on the efforts of the juvenile court and included presentations by:

- Jack Furay, Supervising Referee, Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court (IJTC)
- Donna Groman, Supervising Judge, Delinquency Court
- Margaret Henry, Supervising Judge, Dependency Court
- Sherri Sobel, Referee, Dependency Court and Co-Chair, Juvenile Court Education Committee
- And several other judges and referees from these three courts

Furay reported that: (1) in his years with the court, he has never seen a youth return to court with his/her school attendance record; (2) 70% of youth who return have not complied with the conditions set; and (3) 50% prefer to pay a fine (which must be paid before they can obtain a CDL) than perform community service or go to a program. He would very much like there to be a school representative in each of his courts or at least a designated school contact for the court to confer with about their truant students. One of the best options would be to have arrangements with schools for these youth to attend Saturday schools.

Groman reported that 25 of the approximately 30–40 youth seen every day at the Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center have poor school attendance. She tries to avoid sending truant youth to Juvenile Hall, as that results in their missing even more school. Instead, she looks at each youth’s situation to see what can be done to help. Groman frequently sends them to Public Counsel’s Education Clinic, which is conveniently located across the street from the court. There, clinic staff look at the youth’s entire school history (including pre-school) to try to determine the core problem, and then talk with parents about solutions. In Groman’s opinion, parent involvement is the most important factor to changing the youth’s situation. She suggests parents have their youth obtain a daily sign-in check for every class their youth takes, and then impose consequences when they are
truant or miss a class. Stability is the key and Groman refers to a variety of community programs to keep the youth at home, such as tutoring, substance abuse prevention, mentoring, wraparound, etc. She also uses community detention programs as a low level sanction.

Henry explained that the Dependency Court works a little differently, as it doesn’t really have parents to deal with. It relies on 6-month court reports for school attendance information and expects children’s social workers to find out why their caseload youth are not attending school. Drugs are a big issue, and a lot of youth are afraid to go to a new school as the curriculum may be different or they fear being bullied or beat up, etc. Independent study is an option when youth aren’t able to cope with school.

Sherri Sobel asks for 30-day reports on education for all of her cases. Her biggest concern is with AWOL youth who are missing school for periods of time. She sees this as a community issue, not a children’s issue and, therefore, the support of adults is needed to resolve this problem. Also, there is a ―big disconnect‖ between parents’ expectations (almost all want their kids to go to college) and their behavior (not getting their kids up for school every day, for example) that must be addressed.

Other judicial officers then talked about the importance of determining the reason(s) for each youth’s truancy and described what variables contribute to their sentencing decisions.

**August 9, 2011**

This meeting focused on comprehensive, collaborative approaches to improving school attendance and included presentations by:

- Hedy Chang, Director, Attendance Works
- Sue Fothergill, Director, Baltimore Student Attendance Initiative

Attendance Works is a national and state level initiative that promotes the important role of school attendance in achieving academic success and focuses, in particular, on reducing chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school in an academic year, whether absences are excused or not). Chang pointed out that students who are chronically absent in Kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read proficiently in 3rd grade and this is especially true for low-income children. In the Oakland Unified School District, over 14% of students (nearly 1 out of 7) are chronically absent. Although data is needed to identify programmatic solutions, it is not being used effectively. Recording attendance is done routinely and, in most districts, it is done electronically, but chronic absence is not typically calculated or monitored, even though that data exists. Further, California is one of only 5 states that does not even have attendance in its longitudinal student database. Hedy identified the major characteristics of successful attendance initiatives and gave examples of some of these efforts in Baltimore, Grand Rapids, and New York City. She then listed some of the things that school districts can provide to improve attendance and what, specifically, the TTF could target or promote.

For the first year of the Baltimore Student Attendance Initiative, the key components of Baltimore’s attendance strategy included examining the data, spreading the word through forums, getting leaders on board and identifying partners. A broad-based work group of over 100 representatives was established, which developed a set of recommendations to dramatically increase student attendance. These recommendations included: instituting a text messaging transportation campaign
to gather data about student experiences getting to and from school; increasing the use of and institutionalizing best practices through a change in direction from a student-focused lens to a school-focused lens; leveraging the impact of after-school and community schools on attendance; making attendance a “must-respond-to” indicator for youth-serving agencies; improving the identification of and responsiveness to homeless youth; and changing student and parental attitudes about attendance. As a result, chronic absence in middle grades decreased by 15% and there were more than 16,000 fewer suspensions in Baltimore City public schools. Key policy changes included: ensuring that schools are places where older students would want to be; ensuring that students have a voice; holding schools and youth-serving agencies accountable for student attendance, as well as students and their families; providing many more incentives than punitive responses; and offering students meaningful choices and alternatives that address why students are absent, such as work-to-learning opportunities, academic options, and social/emotional supports. To reduce the number of school transitions, the Baltimore City School District decided to close or phase out most of its stand-alone middle schools and, instead, open preK–8th grade and 6–12th grade transformation schools.

The second year focused on: maintaining the momentum by strengthening universal approaches, deepening the work with special populations, implementing a coordinated campaign, targeting chronically absent students going into sensitive transition grades (K, 6 and 9), and revising/improving the use of attendance data. Fothergill presented a list of initiatives the school district is currently engaged in to improve attendance and highlighted the partnership between the City Schools and the City Department of Social Services. She then stressed the importance of attendance data in improving school attendance, gave examples of how Baltimore utilizes this data and noted the lessons learned by the Initiative so far.

**August 23, 2011**

This meeting was a youth and community forum organized by the Community Rights Campaign, a task force member. There were approximately 80 participants in the forum, including 23 speakers. Youth, teachers/educators, parents/family members and community advocates addressed their experiences related to truancy enforcement and prevention and offered suggestions to the task force for improving and/or building on current practices.

**September 13, 2011**

This meeting included presentations by:

- Don Ferguson, CEO, Mobile TREC SafeKidZone Program
- Debra Duardo, Director of Pupil Services, on the Los Angeles USD Grad Van program
- David Sapp, Staff Attorney, ACLU of Southern California, on the work of the Los Angeles Community Collaborative

3.2 million people are involved in violent crime each year and 32 million are affected by it. Mobile TREC is a technology program that seeks to mobilize families, schools and neighborhoods to provide a safety net of responders to improve protection and accountability. Families can be equipped with an option on their mobile phone that triggers a massive response when and where necessary; schools can have an affordable, easily deployable, cell phone-based, tool to manage truant students; and neighborhoods can be empowered to respond when someone needs help. With respect to truancy, smart phones with a panic button are given out to students and
their families to create a safe school zone, as students can be prime targets for bullies and afraid to go to school. When the Mobile TREC system was first initiated, 2 of 10 panic button calls required police intervention, so police are now involved with the program from the beginning. Schools may apply for assistance or parents can do so voluntarily; referrals can also come from a SART or SARB. The Alhambra USD is piloting the truancy piece of Mobile TREC’s services and about two dozen students are voluntarily participating.

The LAUSD Grad Van circulates among well-populated areas, is staffed by bilingual personnel, and is outfitted with computers that are hooked up to the LAUSD data system. It provides information about school enrollment, student grades, test scores, CAHSEE exam scores, after-school program participation, and attendance, much like that of a student cumulative record. The Grad Van helps fill the tremendous need for educational and attendance information and the Children’s Court has arranged for the van to be parked at the court as often as needed so that court officers, CSWs, children’s attorneys, and holders of education rights can easily obtain educational information on the youth they are responsible for.

David Sapp pointed out that the Los Angeles Community Collaborative has been focusing on the issuance of daytime curfew violation tickets, especially those issued for tardiness, and the negative impact of these tickets on parents who aren’t even permitted to speak at hearings on their children’s behalf. LAPD’s new directive, which the Collaborative helped shape, is a positive step for addressing this issue, and more work is being done to find other solutions. The Collaborative reviewed the research on preventing/reducing truancy and looked at the Denver, Ohio and Baltimore models. Most current efforts are pilot programs and, therefore, there is not a lot of information/data on results.

He then presented the Collaborative’s handout: Addressing the Root Causes of Chronic Absence and Truancy: Developing a Comprehensive Approach to Improving Student Attendance, Academic Engagement & Community Health in Los Angeles County. This document includes the top 30 core components of a research-based strategy to improve school attendance in the County. Its four main recommendations are:

- Repeal or significantly curtail the current LAPD daytime curfew ordinance and the method of its enforcement in court
- Use the Baltimore approach as a sensible and sustainable school district-wide way of ensuring that students stay in school
- Reform the IJTC court process to focus on solutions and support
- Ensure accurate and regular public dissemination of data on a bi-annual basis from public agencies with roles in implementing or enforcing policies that affect school attendance

On behalf of the Collaborative, David stressed that a vision is needed for bringing together all that we’re learning from the pilots and ongoing research.

Sharon Watson distributed a list of the agreements and learnings of the task force over the past year which includes some components of an overall approach and highlights what is not working well currently, what is working well, and policies and practices that have proven to be effective or show promise.
A task force workgroup was then created to develop an overall approach to increasing school attendance in the County, based on the documents presented today and task force meeting discussions during the past year, to begin identifying recommended actions for implementing some of the best ideas generated so far. The remaining meetings of the task force during 2011 will focus on this work, and a summary report will be drafted by the January 2012 meeting.

*Full meeting summaries can be found on the Education Coordinating Council's website: [www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org](http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org) under Current Activities, School Attendance Task Force, Task Force Meetings, Agendas and Minutes.
Appendix F  Alhambra Unified School District Programs

Parent University

Gateway To Success
School Safety Event Bring Many Hands Together
“Parent University”

One of the primary goals of the Alhambra School District is to ensure that all students are safe. The standards to educate a child are many, and these do not revolve only around school subjects. Factors such as a child’s physical and emotional well-being are also crucial to his or her success.

“We work to educate the whole child, and it takes many people to do this,” said Dr. Laurel Bear, District Director of Student Services and Gateway To Success.

The Alhambra School District’s Gateway To Success Program has been instrumental in helping bring in a 5-year Federal Grant through the Safe School and Healthy Students Initiative. The district is currently in its fourth year of the initiative, which revolves around school safety and focuses on violence prevention, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention, student behavioral, social, and emotional supports, mental health services, and early childhood social and emotional learning programs. The funding provides for extensive programs and support, such as Special Resource Officers to mentor students and serve as liaisons for the Police Department, detection dogs to look for contraband materials such as drugs or weapons, and a network of counselors to help at-risk students.

The programs the grant helps to fund illustrate the community and collaboration needed to reach every child. When the district hosted their event “Parent University,” the primary focus was to educate families about the importance of school safety. The phrase, “We all have a hand in every child’s success” is a fitting theme to punctuate the day’s activities.

“Many people have a hand in the success of the child, and we are celebrating that at the Parent University and the title reflects how important cooperation is,” Dr. Bear said.

The district’s Gateway to Success program is presenting Parent University with the Alhambra Police Department monthly. The event features many workshops, guest speakers, an honor to local heroes, community resource vendors, and free childcare. Information will be available through translators in multiple languages. It is free to attend and will take place at various schools throughout the district.

Everyone in attendance has been encouraged to decorate a cardboard hand, which will be in both adult and child sizes. The completed hands will then be linked together and placed around the community.

Workshops are varied and designed to meet the diversity of the students within the district. Those offered include topics like teens and the Internet as hosted by an FBI agent, effective communication with students, graduation requirements, food and fitness, positive discipline, and the road to college. Parent and student advisory boards have been consulted to rank the events at Parent University and help determine its final shape and content.

Dr. Bear underscored the event’s theme in recognizing the boards’ involvement as part of a “truly collaborative community.” The Police Department has also distributed posters advertising the free event around the community.

For more information, please contact Laurel Bear Ph.D. at (626) 943-3410, or at bear_laurel@alhambra.k12.ca.us.
Incredible Years

Want to be a Parent of a Happy and Successful Child?

Attend FREE Parenting Classes!

AUSD’s Gateway to Success program will provide FREE Parenting Classes to parents of children ages 3 to 5 years. Learn EFFECTIVE and USEFUL parenting skills. Classes will be offered in English, Spanish and Chinese. Day and Time to be Announced.

To register or for more information, please call (626) 943-3410