



# Connected to Practice

*Best practices—A Focus on What Works*

## **Children Succeeding in School**

March 2008

Family Connection Partnership is committed to improving the well-being of Georgia’s children, families, and communities. Family Connection Partnership works jointly with partners across the state to address the serious challenges facing Georgia's children and families.

Family Connection Partnership visions that all Georgia children will be healthy, ready to start and succeed in school, and have stable, economically self-sufficient families that live in strong communities.

Since 1995 Family Connection Partnership has measured the well-being of Georgia’s children using Georgia Kids Count indicators. In 2005 the indicators were revised and expanded. The third set of revised Georgia Kids Count Indicators focuses on Children Succeeding in School.

A child that does well in school in the early years has a better chance at future school success. School absence is linked to poor academic performance and is a risk factor for substance abuse and delinquency ([www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/truncy.txt](http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/truncy.txt)).

The lack of on-time high school completion has implications for student success in the workforce and access to higher education. For communities, long-term economic vitality is dependent on students graduating from high school with the educational foundation necessary for becoming contributing members of the community.

### **Georgia Kids Count Indicators Children Succeeding in School**

Students absent more than 15 days from school

3<sup>rd</sup> grade student meeting or exceeding state standards on CRCT promotional test in Reading

5<sup>th</sup> grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on CRCT promotional tests in Reading and Math

8<sup>th</sup> grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on CRCT promotional tests in Reading and Math

Students who graduate from high school on time

Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working

High school graduates eligible for the HOPE scholarship

## INDICATORS RELATED TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:

Students absent more than 15 days from school

### Why is this indicator important?

- School attendance is critical to successful school achievement.
- Students with the highest truancy rates have the lowest academic achievement and are most likely to drop out of school (Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, 1999).
- Truancy is usually associated with substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, and other risky behaviors.

### What Works?

- **Increase parent/guardian and family involvement.**
- **Identify and address underlying causes of truancy within the family.**
- **Ensure a continuum of support for students.** Include incentives and consequences for good, improved, and poor attendance.
- **Increase collaboration.** Invite schools, courts, law enforcement agencies, social services providers, businesses, and faith-based and youth-serving agencies to participate in decision-making.
- **Set tangible goals to measure program and student performance.**
- **Use effective record keeping methods to track improvements in student attendance and truancy rates.**
- **Establish a community standard through public awareness campaign to educate communities about the value and importance of school attendance.**
- **Address the factors that contribute to truancy in three areas: school, family and community, and student characteristics.** Research shows that issues within these areas need to be addressed to successfully reduce truancy rates among students (<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/truancy/overview.html>).

FACTORS		
School	Family and Community	Student Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Inconsistent and ineffective school attendance policies</li> <li>✓ Poor record keeping</li> <li>✓ Not notifying parents/guardians of absences</li> <li>✓ Unsafe school environment</li> <li>✓ Poor school climate</li> <li>✓ Inadequate identification of special education needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Negative peer influences, such as other truant youth</li> <li>✓ Financial, social, medical, or other problems that pressure students to stay home to help the family</li> <li>✓ Child abuse and neglect</li> <li>✓ Family disorganization</li> <li>✓ Teen pregnancy or parenthood</li> <li>✓ Lack of family support for educational and other goals</li> <li>✓ Violence in or near the home or school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A lack of personal and educational ambition</li> <li>✓ Poor academic performance</li> <li>✓ Lack of self-esteem</li> <li>✓ Unmet mental health needs</li> <li>✓ Alcohol and drug use</li> </ul>

## Resources

A Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Spells Success for Jacksonville Students

<http://www.truancy prevention.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/45.pdf>

Approaches to Truancy Prevention. Mogulescu, S., Segal, H. Vera Institute of Justice. October 2002.

[http://www.vera.org/publication\\_pdf/197\\_377.pdf](http://www.vera.org/publication_pdf/197_377.pdf)

New Approaches to Truancy Prevention in Urban Schools. Walls, C. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education. September 2003. <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-2/truancy.html>

Truancy Prevention: Empowering Communities and Schools to Help Students Succeed

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/truancy/overview.html>

Truancy Prevention in Action: Best Practices and Model Truancy Prevention Programs.

<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/TruancyPreventioninActionBestPracticesandModelTruancyPrograms-ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

Truancy Prevention: Promising Strategies, Best Practices. <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/truancy/best.html>

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## INDICATORS RELATED TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON CRCT PROMOTIONAL TESTS:

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3 <sup>rd</sup> grade student meeting or exceeding state standards on CRCT promotional test in Reading
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5 <sup>th</sup> grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on CRCT promotional tests in Reading and Math
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8 <sup>th</sup> grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on CRCT promotional tests in Reading and Math
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### Why are these indicators important?

- These state-mandated year-end assessment tests provide a measure of how well students have mastered the content and skills in the areas tested.
- Schools can focus efforts on subject areas that need improvement and make efforts to increase overall student performance.
- Students considered to be economically disadvantaged are two times more likely not to meet standards in all areas of the CRCT (Georgia Kids Count, 2005).

### What Works?

- **Address underlying causes of low performance.** These may include poverty, class size, lack of materials, need for additional resources, and training opportunities for teachers.
- **Disaggregate test results or data.** Breaking down overall numbers by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, special education, and students for whom English is their second language brings needed attention to particular groups of students.

- **Apply Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI) techniques.** TAI allows children to progress on an individual basis, and it teaches cooperation by forming teams of students who can help each other to achieve team goals. TAI combines interactive instruction by teachers with cooperative team learning to accelerate the achievement of all students, maximize teaching and learning time, enhance student motivation and positive attitudes toward math, and improve students' social interactions. (<http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=139>)
- **Provide continuing education opportunities for teachers.**

## Resources

How Can Schools Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap? Ferguson, R.F. (1998) North Central Regional Educational Library. <http://www.ncrel.org/gap/library/text/howcan.htm>

Improved Student Learning is Target for Winning Programs. Results. (1999). National Staff Development Council. <http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/results/res10-99rich.cfm>

Public Schools Should Learn from the Best Practices of Military-Run Schools. Viadero, D. (2000). North Central Regional Educational Library. <http://www.ncrel.org/gap/library/text/publicschools.htm>

Team Accelerated Instruction: Math. Promising Practices Network: Programs that Work. <http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=139>

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## INDICATORS RELATED TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION:

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Teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16-19)
Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working
High school graduates eligible for the HOPE scholarship

### Why are these indicators important?

- A high school dropout has far lower earning potential than a high school graduate.
- Not graduating from high school leads to higher unemployment rates and puts teens at risk for poverty.
- Dropping out of high school is strongly related to negative outcomes including: substance abuse, risky sexual activity, unplanned pregnancy, and involvement in criminal behavior.
- The population of teens not in school and not working are at increased risk of living in poverty and needing public assistance.
- The HOPE scholarship has helped fuel a rising tide of enrollment in technical colleges, colleges, and universities. It has made funds available to students who otherwise may not have been financially able to pay for their education.

## What Works?

- **Create safe school climates.** Orderly and non-threatening school environments contribute to dropout prevention (<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c017.html>).
- **Ensure that staff is trained to build cultural sensitivity.** Offer professional development on cultural diversity.
- **Identify students at risk of dropping out.** Research shows that early identification, family involvement, clear instructional objectives, and monitoring student progress are effective in dropout prevention.
- **Acknowledge that an achievement gap exists between economically disadvantaged, minority students, and white students.** Focus efforts on systemic change to better serve the population of students that need the most help.
- **Ensure schools collaborate with communities.** When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, a strong infrastructure creates a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.
- **Increase family engagement.** Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.
- **Focus on early childhood education.** The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades.
- **Early literacy development.** Early interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.
- **Offer mentoring/tutoring programs.** Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a caring adult and student that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.
- **Locate and offer service-learning opportunities to students.** Service-learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. It promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility, and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.
- **Provide alternative schooling.** Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation. These programs pay special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.
- **Develop after-school opportunities.** By providing after-school and summer enhancement programs, schools can eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. These experiences help students, especially those at risk of school failure by filling afternoon "gap time" with constructive and engaging activities.
- **Offer professional development for teachers.** Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue for continuing to develop skills and learn about innovative strategies and techniques.
- **Increase the number of high school graduates eligible for the HOPE scholarship by ensuring that all students are aware of the financial resources available to them.** This includes: encourage students to take more challenging courses in high school to better prepare for further education; use high-quality curriculum and teaching methods in high school; ensure adequate support services for students as they move from high school to college and during their freshman year; improve the transferability of courses and programs among colleges and universities; encourage students to stay in college and earn degrees; and reduce geographical and financial barriers to education beyond high school. (<http://www.sreb.org/main/Publications/MeritBased/MeritBasedScholarship.asp>).

## Resources

Dropout Prevention. Nelson, E. ERIC Clearinghouse for Educational Management: ERIC Digest Number Fourteen. 1985. <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-925/dropout.htm>

Effective Strategies for Increasing Graduation Rates. National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. <http://dle-mediasite-hehd.clemson.edu/Mediasite/Viewer/Viewers/Viewer240TL3Banner.aspx?mode=Default&peid=1d84b884-4d32-41e9-b761-64878271fd38&pid=6c467774-ee3c-4890-977c-89f5a44b170f&playerType=W64Lite>

High School Dropout Prevention. The Advertising Council. <http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=34>

Georgia 2005 Kids Count Factbook

Georgia 2006 Kids Count Factbook

Reconnecting Youth. Virginia Best Practices in School-Based Violence Prevention. [http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/vabp/program\\_details.asp?id=103](http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/vabp/program_details.asp?id=103)

Reducing the Dropout Rate. <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c017.html>

School Dropout Prevention: Information and Strategies for Parents. Hale, L. National Association of School Psychologists. 1998. [http://www.mciu.org/npintra/lib/npintra/mentalhealthfiles/dropout\\_rk.html](http://www.mciu.org/npintra/lib/npintra/mentalhealthfiles/dropout_rk.html)

State Funded Merit-Based Scholarship Programs: Why are they popular? Can they increase participation in higher education? Southern Regional Education Board. <http://www.sreb.org/main/Publications/MeritBased/MeritBasedScholarship.asp>