

Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative

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Working Together...

Serving Families

... Improving Lives

Truancy Prevention Work Group

7:45 - 9:30 AM February 20, 2009

Betty's Pantry – Ottertail City

Attendance: Tindy Rund (Fergus Falls Elementary Schools-70); Thomas Williams (Henning School-25); Blaine Novak (New York Mills School-30); Nicole Hansen (OTC Attorney's Office -70); Brad Vold (OTC Human Services-70); Connie Wenker (Parkers Prairie Schools-60); Brian Korf (Pelican Rapids Schools – 80); and Jane Patrick (Collaborative Coordinator).

1. Jane Patrick served as chair in the absence of John Hamann.
2. The group reviewed the minutes of the December 12, 2008 meeting. The following information was reported in follow-up to the last meeting:
 - The state will soon have new requirements with regard to standards for graduation rates. Specifically it will require that students are tracked starting in 9th grade and only those that graduate on time within four years will count toward district graduation rates. Although the state has different criteria that they measure, the group would like to look at their own internal data to track graduation rates. Specifically they would like to track:
 - a) The number of students starting 12th grade at the start of the school year;
 - b) The number of students graduating on time at the end of the school year;
 - c) The number of students that formally drop out of school during the year;
 - d) The number of students that do not drop out but that do not graduate on time; and
 - e) The variables for those students that withdraw from traditional school settings and move to ALCs, on-line classes, etc.
 - Jane updated the group on the Parent Support Outreach Program. Additional grant funding was received for 2009. Services are available in all districts but there are currently no home visitors for families in the Pelican and Fergus Falls districts.
3. The group discussed the truancy video that they had developed last year. Jane also indicated that two other truancy videos are available on YouTube. Jane shared these links with the work group. Thomas indicated that his technology person could probably put our truancy video on YouTube if we could get a copy to him. Once the Otter Tail County video is on the web, Jane will share all three video links with the principals so they can access them easily. The following ideas were mentioned for use of the videos:
 - Use when meeting with parents and students about attendance
 - During detention for truancy
 - During Saturday school

The group asked that Jane develop a short quiz that could go along with the OTC truancy video so students could be quizzed on the information.

4. Jane received the last attendance report for the 2007-08 school year and provided a summary to the group for review. Several trends were noted including: a) absences per student are at an all time high at 9.55 absences per student per year; b) hours reported by attendance clerks

are at an all time low at only 64 hours reported per year for all districts; and c) the percent of unexcused absences compared to excused absences is on the rise and is now at the same rate as 2002-03. The schools are interested in having the information broken down by their individual schools. Jane will put this together and send it to each of the individual schools.

5. The group discussed activities they have completed throughout the school year targeting attendance. As part of the group's work plan they need to document and report on the various activities they have completed. Jane will send the summary sheet around to the work group members so they can fill in the activities they have done.
6. Nicole and Brad updated the group on the courthouse meetings. Jane also shared a summary of the meetings held this year. 50 students have received letters from the County Attorney as of January 19. 14 meetings have been held at the courthouse, and 40% of the students receiving letters are "repeat" offenders meaning they have had previous letters sent to them regarding attendance. The group discussed:
 - Students with excessive excused absences are hard to deal with because the schools usually don't have parent support. When this happens, schools should consider requiring a doctor's note or have the student see the school health aide before they are considered excused.
 - The courthouse meetings are not effective for students that have an extensive history for serious truancy issues. The meetings are most effective for those students who are just developing truancy patterns.

Nicole explained that the group may need to look at other alternatives to the current county attorney meetings at the courthouse. The meetings require a significant contribution of staff time from both the County Attorney and Human Services since they are required to attend meetings each week. With declining resources, staff time may not be available next year to keep this program up and running.

7. The group completed their planning process and work plan for FY10. Discussions included:
 - a) ***Does the group find value in continuing to meet?*** There was a consensus by the group that they wanted to continue meeting. There is no other time or place when all of the partners at the table meet to discuss attendance.
 - b) ***The group will continue to meeting three times during FY10 but will shift their meeting time to 9AM to accommodate travel time for those who would be on overtime before 8AM.***
 - c) ***The group will request funding of \$400 to cover meeting expenses and printing.***
 - d) ***Specific work plan tasks will include:***
 - Identify new strategies to address elementary age attendance including exploring meetings between the county attorney's office and students in elementary school that begin to display excessive absences
 - Continue to track and report attendance on a county wide basis
 - Track attendance activities and review new strategies throughout the year that work well with various populations.
8. The meeting was adjourned by consensus. The next meeting will be held on **Friday, August 14, 2009 at Betty's Pantry in Ottertail City**. All principals will be invited to attend.