

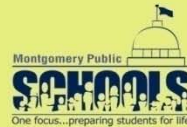
School Attendance Matters! Every Child in School Everyday



To learn more about the Truancy Intervention Program (TIP), call the District Attorney's Office Helping Montgomery Families Initiative at (334) 832-1666 or Montgomery Public Schools Student Support Services at (334) 223-6851



Helping Montgomery
Families Initiative
A Division of the District Attorney's Office



One focus...preparing students for life!



Offices of Ellen Brooks, District Attorney's (DA)
Helping Montgomery Families Initiative (HMFI)

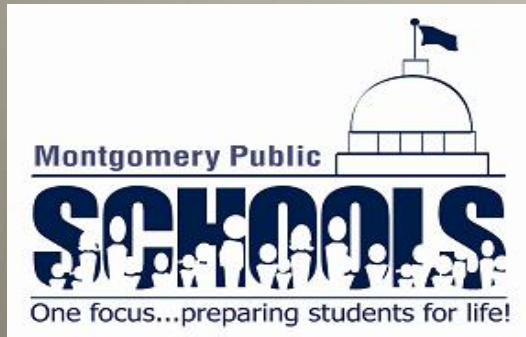
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Montgomery Public Schools

Truancy Intervention Program (TIP)

A Multi Disciplinary

Approach to Reducing Truancy



Alabama's Truancy Law

Mandatory School Attendance Act

- Requires parents to enroll their children between the ages of 7 and 17 years of age
- Requires parents to ensure their children attend school
- Requires parents to ensure their children behave appropriately in school
- Authorizes the DA to vigorously enforce this law

Montgomery Public Schools (MPS)

District Information

- Enrollment of @32,000 students
- Operates 59 schools and plans to close/consolidate eight schools at the end of this school year
- The only public school system in the county

District Information (cont.)

- 72 % of MPS students qualify for free or reduced lunch
- Ethnicity
 - 77% African American
 - 15% White
 - 4% Hispanic
 - 3% Asian
 - 1% Other

Background Information on Truancy Efforts

- Montgomery's local Children's Policy Council established a subcommittee in 2004 named the Juvenile Risk and Resource Evaluation Committee (JRREC)
- JRREC meets monthly to address truancy and delinquency issues, share information on resources and data, and develop effective systematic processes to address issues

Background Information on Truancy Efforts (cont.)

- Most of the SS/HS CMT partners participated in JRREC and were aware of the local truancy issues
- Early in the SS/HS implementation the CMT formed a truancy work group to address the following:
 - Review MPS truancy policies/processes
 - Define process for identification and referral of truant students
 - Define process for providing interventions designed to improve student attendance

Work Group's Findings

- Existing MPS policies for dealing with unexcused absences not consistently enforced
- Internal processes for dealing with attendance not clearly defined or enforced
- Strained relationship between law enforcement, juvenile court, the DA's office and the school district's truancy department

Work Group Findings (cont.)

- Law requires parents/guardians to be served due process notification letters by District Resource Officers (DROs)
- When parents/guardians do not attend Early Warning they must be served at home by DROs which is difficult to accomplish
- In order to file affidavits certain identifying information is required which is often difficult to secure
- Best practices for truancy issues were not identified

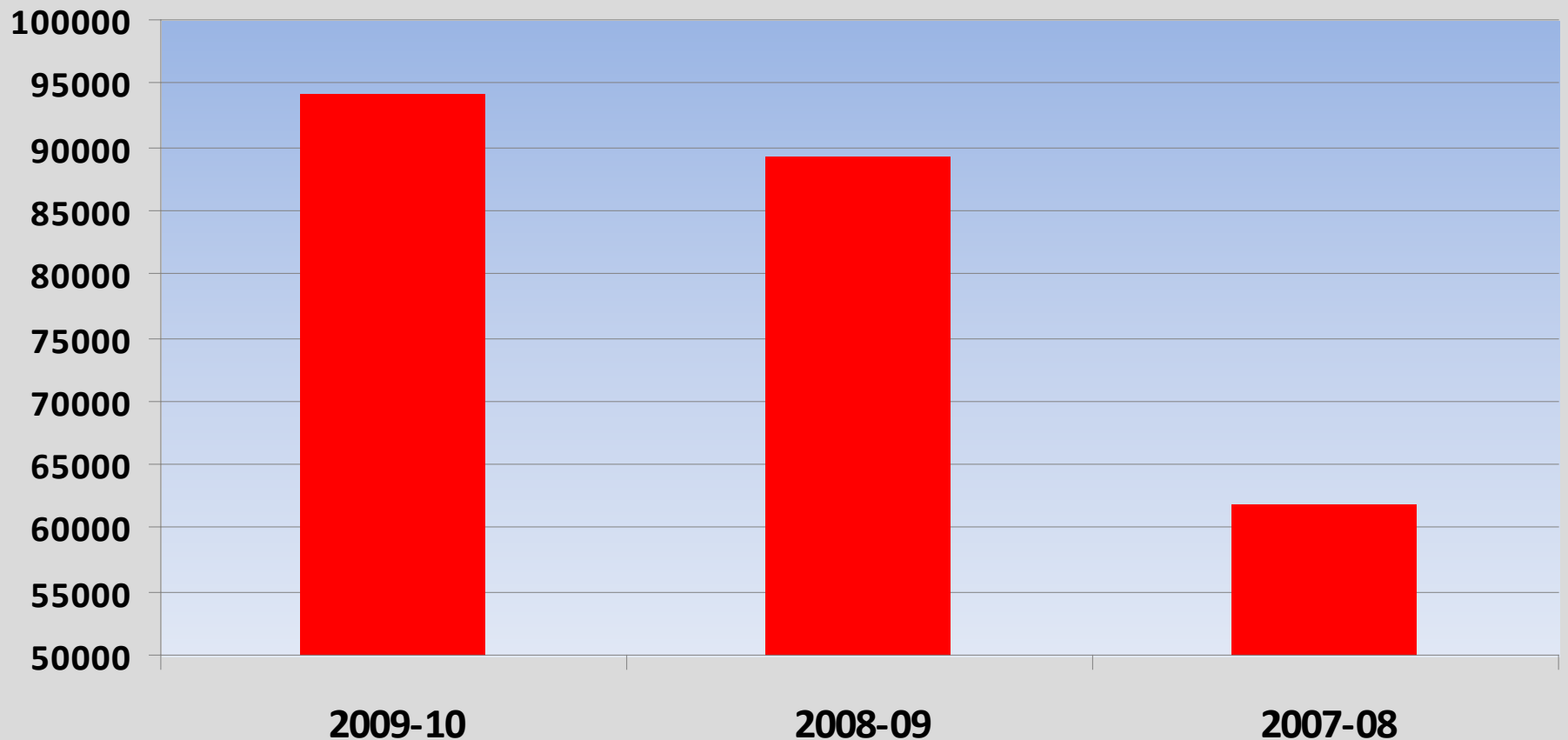
Work Group Findings (cont.)

- According to the AL Kids Count Data Book (2009) Montgomery County had the lowest graduation rate (45.2%) of all counties in the state in 2008 (the state average was 64.6%)
- Drop out prevention efforts and improved graduation rates were expressed concerns of new superintendent and community partners
- Poor attendance clearly impacts low graduation rates and high drop out rates
- Attendance needed to be linked to drop out prevention efforts



MPS-STI Truancy Data Three Year Period

Unexcused Absences District-wide



The SS/HS CMT's Response

Explore how other school district's
were successfully dealing with
the problem



Action Steps

- The SS/HS CMT's truancy work group secured the support of the new superintendent and began researching best practices in truancy
 - ❖ Contacted SDE to identify best practice sites
 - ❖ Visited and phoned best practice sites
 - ❖ Conducted online research
 - ❖ Requested information from TAS
 - ❖ Compiled information learned from other SS/HS sites
 - ❖ Communicated with the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network – Clemson University, Clemson, SC

Best Practices In Truancy

Work group learned that six critical components of successful truancy intervention programs are:

- Collaboration
- Family Involvement
- Comprehensive Approach
- Use of incentives & sanctions
- Operate in a supportive context
- Rigorous evaluation & assessment

The Best Practices Were Already Being Used In The Helping Montgomery Families Initiative Program



(HMFI) is a collaborative effort led by the DA and MPS. The Initiative includes local law enforcement, healthcare professionals, mental health, child welfare, faith based organizations, juvenile justice agencies, and other organizations with the primary focus of intervening in the lives of school children who have been suspended but not charged with a criminal offense.

Action Steps

- Propose a truancy pilot program through a partnership between MPS and the DA's HMFI program with the goal of reducing truancy and improving the graduation rate
- Secure buy-in from stakeholders and required approval
 - ❖ Meetings
 - ❖ Presentations
 - ❖ Press Conference
 - ❖ Interviews with various media outlets (i.e. newspapers, radio, television, magazine)

The Pilot

Truancy Intervention Program (TIP)

TIP targets three schools (1 middle and 2 elementary)

The schools were selected based on the following:

- belief that it is important to intervene in attendance issues early in a student's life
- review of school attendance data
- review of feeder school patterns
- the opening of a new middle school
- the number of schools/students that could be served with limited additional manpower and resources

The TIP Process

- **MPS Technology Dept. and HMFI collaborated to develop attendance data reports**
- **HMFI Pulls Attendance Reports (Bi-Weekly)**
- **First Unexcused Absence**
 - Parents/guardians have three (3) days to submit valid excuse following the student's return to school
 - Compulsory Attendance Letter generated from school for first unexcused absence (HMFI sends reports to schools requesting verification of attendance letters sent to parents/guardians)

The TIP Process (continued)

Need Compulsory Letters 2-11- thru 2-25

Number	Student Name	GR	G	Phone	Home	Abs	Tdy	Compulsory Ltr Date Sent	Date Excuses Rcv'd (if applicable)	Comments
11111	Mickey Mouse	00	M	888123	Mrs. Mouse	1	0		02/28/11	
22222	Donald Duck	05	F	888234	Mrs. Duck	1	0			Tardy
33333	Goofey Smith	05	F	888345	Mrs. Smith	1	0		02/28/11	
44444	Betty Boop	01	F	888456	Mrs. Boop	1	0	03/01/11		
55555	Daisy Duck	01	M	888567	Mrs. Duck	1	0		02/28/11	
66666	Minnie Mouse	01	F	888678	Mrs. Mouse	1	0		03/01/11	
77777	Mighty Mouse	04	M	888789	Mrs. Mouse	1	0			Tardy
88888	Joe Sponge Bob	00	M	888891	Mrs. Bob	1	0		02/28/11	
99999	Dora Explorer	01	M	888890 1	Mrs. Explorer	1	0	03/01/11		

The TIP Process (continued)

- **Second Unexcused Absence**

- HMFI sends out attendance/alert letter (can only occur if the initial compulsory letter is sent by the schools)

- **THIRD Unexcused Absence**

- HMFI sends out a notification for parents/students to attend an Attendance Intervention Program on site at their respective school
- Parents/guardians and children attend an Attendance Intervention Program

The TIP Process (continued)

Attendance Intervention Program

- Program hosted on site at pilot schools
- Joint Presentation by MPS & HMFI staff regarding attendance laws, consequences & negative impact of truancy for students
- Parents are served notification of the Compulsory Attendance Law (a letter which parents must sign)
- Individual meetings are conducted with each family to discuss barriers/needs, develop attendance contracts, and link families to school and community based services
- Supplemental materials are used such as brochures, videos and speakers to reinforce the importance of school attendance

The TIP Process (continued)

Supplemental Materials



The TIP Process (continued)

- **After Fifth Unexcused Absence**
 - Students are identified as truant by HMFI staff after receiving their 5th unexcused absence (a report is sent to MPS)
 - MPS sends notification to parents/guardians to attend an Early Warning (EW) session with their child
 - Early Warning sessions are a collaborative effort to address truancy issues prior to the filing of affidavits/prosecution and involves Juvenile Court staff, Prosecutor, MPS and HMFI
 - Parents are served notification of the Compulsory Attendance Law and signatures and identifications are obtained
 - Individual meetings are conducted with each family to discuss barriers/needs, develop attendance contracts, and link families to school and community based services
 - HMFI continues to monitor and track attendance for all participants

The TIP Process (continued)

- Continued absences result in a family assessment conducted by HMFI
- HMFI staff utilizes the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale-General Version (NCFAS-G) to conduct home visits to assess the strengths and needs of the entire family
- A Multi-Disciplinary approach is utilized to assist with developing an Individualized Intervention Plan (IIP) for students and families
- The IIP links the student and family to appropriate school and community based services to address specific needs and improve the student's ability to attend school regularly

The TIP Process (continued)

Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Center for Adolescents & Child Development (CCAD)
- Chemical Addictions Program (CAP)
- DA-HMFI
- Montgomery Co. Department of Human Resources
- Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority
- Montgomery Co. Juvenile Court
- Montgomery Police Department
- Montgomery Co. Public Health Department
- Montgomery Public Schools
- Montgomery County Sheriff's Office
- Partners in Education
- Sunshine Center

The TIP Process (continued)

- HMFJ staff serves as advocates and assists with coordination and linkage to services identified in the IIP
- HMFJ staff continues to monitor student's attendance
- Additional unexcused absences may result in filing of a warrant against the parents/guardians

The TIP Process (continued)

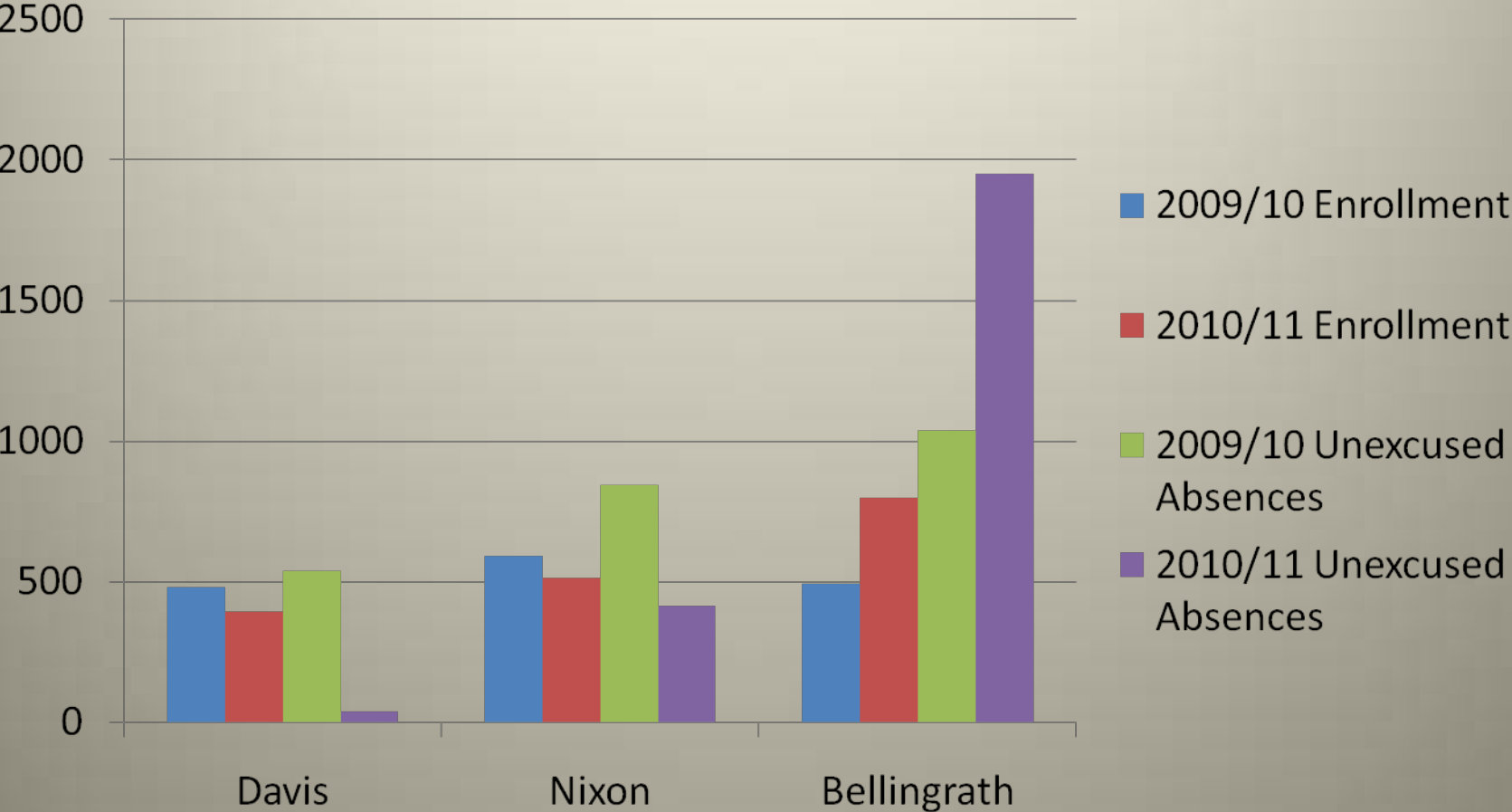
Promotions and Incentives

- Pilot schools are encouraged to promote attendance with parents and students
 - ✓ Award Ceremonies for parents & students
 - ✓ Perfect Attendance Classroom Completion and Recognition
 - ✓ Banners designed and are on exhibit to promote attendance

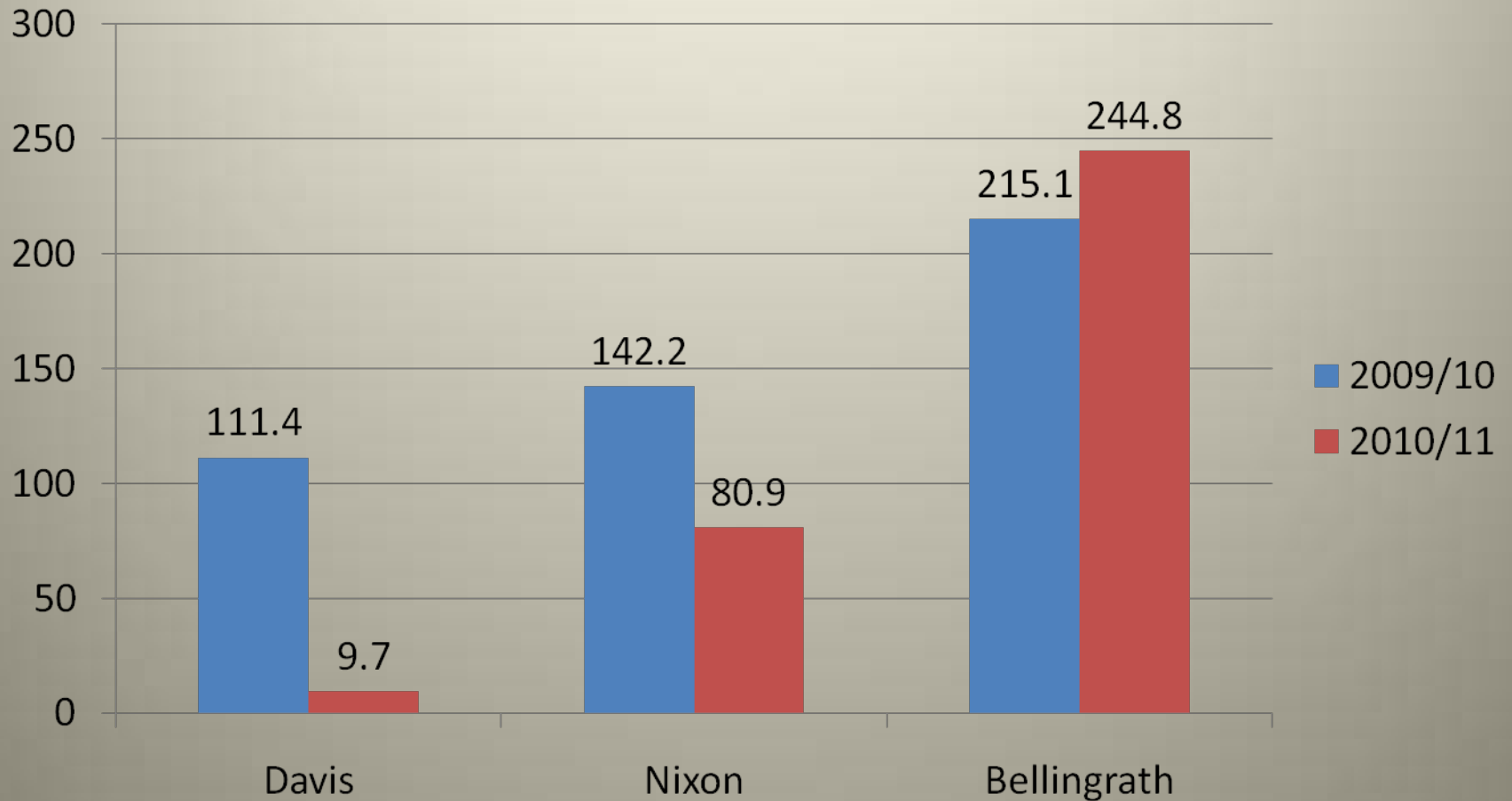
Elementary School Attendance Promotion Banner



Early Results -1st Semester Comparisons of Unexcused Absences in Pilot Schools for Baseline and Current School Years



Early Results - 1st Semester Comparisons of Unexcused Absences Rate per 100 students in Pilot Schools for Baseline and Current School Years



Barriers

- District switched to a new district/state wide data base system (INOW) with multiple implementation problems throughout 1st semester
- Attendance not recorded daily as needed in all schools
- Baseline #s from 2009/10 at middle school under reported
- Highly mobile population
- Incorrect addresses & phone numbers for large number of parents
- Schools failing to send compulsory attendance letter after 1st absence
- Schools failing to enforce 3 day limit for submitting an excuse
- Schools not entering updated addresses

What Works

- Joint letter from DA and Superintendent about the pilot program and the importance of school attendance included in student orientation packets at the beginning of the school year
- Alert letters from HMFI provides opportunity for parents to contact school and correct any incorrect information regarding attendance
- Alert letters serve as a deterrent to further unexcused absences
- AIP sessions held at child's school allows opportunity to meet one-on-one with parent and child, review child's profile (grades, attendance, conduct), discuss consequences of unexcused absences, link them to services as needed and principals are able to participate
- AIP prevents many families/students going on to Early Warning Sessions
- AIP allows opportunity for HMFI to serve Compulsory Attendance Law, collect identification information, correct address and sign attendance contract

What Works (cont.)

- Early Warning allows another opportunity to meet individually with parents, link families to services and involve the authority of the Juvenile Court
- Involvement of school social workers at AIP and Early Warning
- Constant monitoring of school attendance records
- Family assessment using a evidence based instrument
- Multi disciplinary team approach
- Strong collaboration between DA, Juvenile Court, law enforcement, the school district and stakeholders
- Accurate data collection
- Prosecution as a last resort

WINNERS NEVER QUIT EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL EVERYDAY



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Contact Information

Sandra Edwards, Director
Helping Montgomery Families Initiative
District Attorney Office
251 South Lawrence Street
Montgomery, AL. 36102
334-832-1666
SANDRAEDWARDS@mc-ala.org

Letha Maxton, Director
MPS Support Services
Fews School Bldg. RM # 210
321 Early Street
Montgomery, AL 36104
3234-223-6851
Letha.maxton@mps.k12.al.us

Teresa Green, Project Director
MPS SS/HS Initiative
Fews School Bldg. RM # 207
321 Early Street
Montgomery, AL 36104
3234-223-6902
Teresa.green@mps.k12.al.us