

**Virginia Commission on Youth
Study of Truancy and School Dropout Prevention
Advisory Group**

DROPOUT SUBCOMMITTEE

General Assembly Building
5 East Conference Room
October 8, 2008
1:00 p.m.

AGENDA

Attending:

Delegates William Fralin (electronic participating) and Frank Hall
Sarah Geddes, Tracey Jerkins, Suzanne Devlin, Cynthia Cave, Jean Bankos

Monitored:

Ingrid Grant, Rita Bishop, Maria Sobers, Suzanne Whitehead, Otis Dowdy, Robert Ransome

Absent:

Michele Dowdy, Jan McKee, Bet Neale and Thomas Shortt

Staff Attending:

Amy M. Atkinson, Leah Hamaker and Cordell Hairston

I. Welcome and Introductions

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director

Ms. Atkinson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Atkinson welcomed everyone to the Dropout Subcommittee and reviewed the meeting's agenda.

II. Statewide Activities on Dropout Prevention

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Office of Student Services

Virginia Department of Education

Ms. Cave described the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Dropout Summit in partnership with America's Promise. As a follow up to the Dropout Summit, VDOE will host additional regional meetings to deal with truancy and school dropouts in 2009. Ms. Cave stated that VDOE was establishing an internal task force which will focus on aligning efforts for dropout prevention programs. In addition, Ms. Cave discussed the Department's participation in the Silent Epidemic Study and organizations like Every Kid Counts.

III. Preliminary Findings and Proposed Recommendations

Advisory Group Discussion

Ms. Atkinson gave an overview of the Study of Truancy and Dropout Prevention draft. Subsequently, Ms. Atkinson provided the Dropout Subcommittee an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations.

Note: Dropout Subcommittee comments are in blue.

Finding – There are insufficient meaningful education options for “underachievers” or youth not succeeding in traditional school setting. Many of these students may also be overage for their grade.

Recommendations

1. Request that the Virginia Board of Education develop regulations to encourage the creation of overage academies. (This recommendation was received from the Alternative Education Advisory Group)
2. Request the Commission on Youth conduct a study/gap analysis of vocational education options available in the Commonwealth.
3. Request that the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) brief the Commission on the current status and/or feasibility of establishing 21st Century Schools in Virginia.

The Subcommittee requested to change “regulations” to “guidelines” in Recommendation 1. In Recommendation 2, the Subcommittee requested to change “vocational” to “Career and Technical Education (CTE).” In addition, the Subcommittee suggested adding a workforce recommendation and a recommendation that Commission staff interview parents and students.

Finding – School divisions’ truancy policies may create unintended consequences. For example, if the student had 6 or more unexcused absences in the first grading period, the child may be more likely to not return to school if the number of unexcused absences is tied to passing the class. If there is no hope for passing the class, the student may stop attending school altogether.

Recommendations

1. Request the Virginia Board of Education to issue additional guidance to school divisions regarding the unintended consequences of attendance policies which may keep students from returning to schools.
2. Request the Virginia Board of Education to issue guidance regarding Section 22.1- 253:13.4 of the *Code of Virginia* which allows schools to establish procedures to facilitate the acceleration of students that allows qualified students, with the recommendation of the division superintendent, without completing the 140-hour class, to obtain credit for such class upon demonstration of mastery of the course content and objectives.

The Subcommittee asked that Recommendation 2 be shared with the full Advisory Group.

Finding – There is a shortage of school-based prevention programs that address issues such as violence prevention, anger management, conflict resolution and other behavioral health needs.

Recommendations

1. Request that the VDOE establish guidelines for statewide implementation of Student Assistance Programs (SAPs). (This recommendation was received from the Study of Alternative Education Options Advisory Group.)
2. Request a budget amendment for the VDOE to construct a database to capture data on utilization of SAPs in Virginia. (This recommendation was

received from the Study of Alternative Education Options Advisory Group.)

Due to the Virginia Department of Education's current work on SAPs, the Subcommittee opted not to endorse either recommendation. The Subcommittee asked that a new budget recommendation be developed to fund evidence-based prevention and at-risk programs.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.