

Racine County Truancy Committee

Wisconsin Statutes § 118.162 mandates the creation of a Truancy Committee, which must consist of representatives from the community including the school districts, law enforcement, judiciary, social and human services, prosecutors, parents and others. Currently the Committee has 18 members and meets monthly. State statute charged the Committee with developing a Truancy Plan to submit to the school board. After two years of consultation and drafting, the Plan was given to and approved by the Racine Unified School Board in March, 2006.

The Truancy Committee also partnered with the Johnson Foundation to hold three Wingspread Truancy Summits to raise awareness of school attendance and engagement issues. From these Summits sprang ideas to address first time and repeat truancy offenders in Racine Municipal and Circuit Courts; a public relations campaign consisting of “stay in school” posters and short cable TV informational spots; studies and surveys on educational attainment; mentoring and informational programs in the high schools; and identifying groups and organizations that have potential ability to address school engagement problems.

The habitual truancy rate (an unexcused absence for part or all of five or more school days during a semester) in the Racine Unified School District has dropped five school years in a row, from 36.5 % in year 2000-2001 to 8.7 % in year 2005-2006. By comparison, the habitual truancy rate has increased slightly statewide in the last two school years and in 2005-2006 was 9.7 %, a full percentage point over the Racine Unified District.