

**Truancy in Washington State:  
Filing Trends, Juvenile Court Responses, and the  
Educational Outcomes of Petitioned Truant Youth**

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**Washington State Truancy Report: 2015**

**Washington State Center for Court Research**

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## Executive Summary

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Truancy and its correlates, school disengagement and failure, negatively impact life chances for children, the well-being of communities where they live, and the vitality of the state as a whole. The Washington State legislature passed the 1995 “Becca Laws” in response to the case of Becca Hedman, whose chronic truancy and running away from home led to her tragic murder at the age of 12. The Becca Laws are intended to empower families, schools and students to jointly address and overcome barriers to attendance with support from the juvenile courts as necessary<sup>1</sup>. Since that time, local juvenile courts and school districts across Washington have implemented a variety of programs and practices designed to fulfill the requirements of the Becca Laws while respecting the unique strengths and challenges present in their own communities. Some of these attempts have failed while others have survived and even shown promise over time. All are potentially instructive.

Twenty years later, it is time to capitalize on these experiences in order to develop effective truancy intervention programs that reach the students they are meant to serve. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of Community Truancy Boards (CTBs), and yet these model programs are available in only a handful of Washington State juvenile courts. The truancy petition process is meant to provide families, schools and communities with the legal backing needed to enforce school attendance by identifying and removing barriers to attendance, yet barely one-third of eligible students receive truancy petitions. Of those who do receive truancy petitions, few attend school districts that have quality court-school truancy intervention programs in place. The truancy petition process represents the letter of Washington’s truancy laws, but ignores their spirit and intent. The intent of the Becca Laws is to unite schools, courts, communities and families in an effort to provide the services needed to help students to overcome their own personal barriers to school attendance. Truancy petitions are a means to this end, if used in that spirit.

This is the second in a series of WSSCR reports describing statewide trends in truancy petition filings, school performance and outcomes for petitioned youth, and current truancy prevention and intervention programs in juvenile courts across the state. This report describes the current condition of truancy practices in Washington State from the perspective of the juvenile courts; outlines recent and historical trends in truancy petition filings; and reports on the educational progress and 3-year outcomes of students who were petitioned truant during the 2010/11 academic year (AY). Drawing from a statewide survey of juvenile courts, linked juvenile court and education data, and other sources, the two studies reported herein describe the common educational pathways of truant youths, both before and after court contact, and provide an overview of the current range of juvenile court responses to truancy in Washington State.

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<sup>1</sup> See Gold & Yates (2014). Washington State Truancy Benchbook.

## Key Findings

### Filing Trends

1. The number of truancy filings in juvenile courts has increased dramatically in recent years, while the volume of other juvenile court cases has decreased. The total number of truancy petitions filed per year is now nearly equally to the total number of all juvenile offender filings, combined.
2. Statewide, at no time during the past decade have more than 36% of the most chronically truant students in a given school year actually received truancy petitions.

### Petitioned Truant Students

1. Almost one-half of all students who received truancy petitions during the 2010/11 school year were in grades 9 or 10. Compared to the general student population, they were also disproportionately likely to be American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, or Black, and more likely to be eligible for school-based special education, free or reduced price lunch, migrant or homeless services.
2. Close to one-half of the petitioned truants in grades 6 or higher would go on to face juvenile offender charges during the same year or the three-year follow-up period. Over one-quarter of the older petitioned truants had faced juvenile offender charges during the 5 years preceding their truancy petition.
3. Eight percent (8%) of the petitioned high school students in the study spent time in juvenile detention in relation to a truancy case.
4. The majority of high school age-petitioned truants lacked sufficient credits needed to graduate from high school on time, and had an average cumulative GPA of less than 1.5/4.0.
5. Within 4 years following their truancy petition, over 60% of all petitioned truant students in grades 9 through 12 had left high school without earning a diploma, GED, or any other academic credential.
6. The younger a student was at the time of the first truancy petition, the less likely he or she was to graduate from high school.



## Juvenile Court-Based Truancy Intervention Strategies

1. Twenty-nine out of 33 juvenile courts in Washington State returned a 2014 survey of truancy practices in juvenile courts. Eleven of the 29 operate (CTBs), and four others operate other types of truancy prevention programs.
2. Most juvenile courts occasionally use secure detention as a sanction for particularly recalcitrant-truant youth.
3. The juvenile courts reported a number of barriers to providing effective truancy prevention programs, including funding, other resources and the challenges of establishing and maintaining partnerships with multiple school districts in their jurisdiction.
4. Thirty-one percent (31%) of public-school students in Washington State are enrolled in districts with active CTBs, and an additional 31% are in districts with access to other types of court-based truancy prevention programs.
5. School districts that operate CTBs in partnership with the juvenile court system are more proactive in filing truancy petitions than are school districts without these programs.

## Policy Recommendations

1. Juvenile courts and schools should have access to dedicated sources of funding and technical support to operate evidence-based truancy intervention and prevention services, including community truancy boards.
2. Juvenile courts and schools should jointly develop and establish shared, clear, and measurable objectives for the truancy petition process.
3. Establish sustained examination and reporting on the performance of truancy-related prevention programs and interventions in Washington State to identify effective practices.
4. Establish minimum criteria for effective truancy prevention programs, including community truancy boards.
5. Encourage and support the use of the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) as an inexpensive and simple assessment tool to identify the specific needs of individual truant youth.

6. Provide ongoing technical assistance to juvenile courts and their partner school districts to support them in using data to evaluate the degree of success of their truancy reduction interventions and to adapt their practices as needed in response to analysis of performance and outcome data (i.e., implement continual quality improvement).
7. Develop and maintain a school-level inventory of school-based, truancy-related practices.
8. Engage with students and families sooner rather than later--focus on identification of attendance problems, disciplinary problems, and school failure in the early grades. Engage the parents of younger students not attending school as early as possible to address barriers to attendance and to give students the optimum opportunity for skill building and school success.
9. Establish mechanisms to stay abreast of ongoing research in this rapidly developing field and to quickly translate and disseminate research findings to policy makers, program designers, and practitioners.
10. Update the current inventory of court-based truancy-related practices on a regular basis, adapting the survey as practices and information needs evolve over time.

## SECTION I: Overview

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Truancy from school is a serious and pervasive social problem in Washington State and the nation. Every year, hundreds of thousands of students are chronically truant from school across the U.S., with more than 40,000 in Washington alone (Washington State Becca Task Force, 2009). Considerable research has demonstrated the negative impact of truancy on families, schools, communities, and most importantly, the students themselves. Truancy has been associated with a host of short- and long-term negative outcomes such as low educational attainment, low socio-economic status, the initiation and maintenance of substance abuse, delinquency, and adult criminality, costing our society untold millions in lost wages and lost productivity (Baker, Sigmund & Nugent, 2001; Bell, Rosen & Dynlacht, 1994; Bridgeland, DiJulio & Morison, 2006; Garry, 1996; Strand & Lovrich, 2014).

The tremendous personal and financial cost of truancy to individuals and society has made truancy reduction efforts a priority in Washington, and in numerous other states around the country. In 1995, Washington passed the Becca Laws (E2SSB 5439, Chapter 312, Laws of 1995), designed to empower parents, schools and courts to intervene with youth engaging in high-risk behaviors such as running away from home or chronic truancy (George, 2011; Gold, Yates, & Ganzhorn, 2014). The Becca Laws encompass the so-called “status offenses”, including “Child in Need of Services” (CHiNS), “At-Risk Youth” (ARY), and truancy.

In 2012 the Superior Court Judges’ Association (SCJA) asked the WSSCR for regular reports that would detail recent trends in school attendance and truancy court cases, provide an overview of current court intervention practices, and review and conduct evaluations of truancy intervention efforts. In response, this report includes an overview of truancy trends across the state, a longitudinal analysis of educational progress and outcomes for petitioned truant youth, and a presentation of the results of a survey of court-based truancy interventions and practices in Washington State juvenile courts.

### Truancy Petition Filings: Statewide Trends

The Becca Laws mandate that school districts file a truancy petition in juvenile court when a student has accumulated 7 unexcused absences in a single month<sup>2</sup> or 10 unexcused absences during the course of an academic year. Schools were required to file petitions on all eligible students age 17 or younger until June of 2012, when an amendment was passed lowering the mandatory filing age to 16<sup>3</sup>. Once the petition is filed, the local juvenile court is required to assume jurisdiction if the petition is supported by evidence (Clark County, 2013). Previous research and other published statistics, however, suggest that only a fraction of students who meet these criteria actually receive a truancy petition (Klima, Miller, & Nunlist, 2009a).

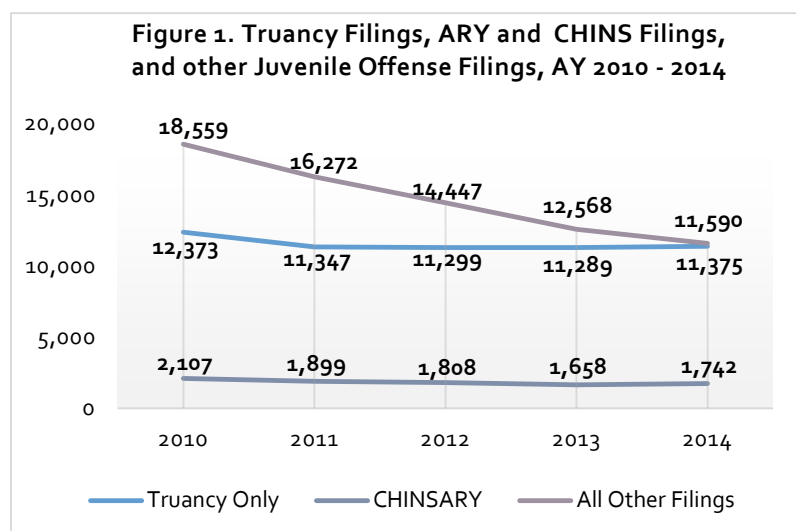
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<sup>2</sup> While districts may file a truancy petition after 5 absences in a month, they are not technically required to file until the student reaches 7 unexcused absences in a month.

<sup>3</sup> While schools could still choose to file a petition on 17 year-old truant youth, courts and school would no longer receive financial reimbursement for students over 16 years of age.

Truancy petition filings in Washington State increased rapidly and dramatically after the passage of the Becca Laws in 1995. A 2011 WSSCR truancy report tracked the rates of truancy and other “status offense” filings<sup>4</sup> from just prior to 1994 through 2009 (George, 2011). During that period the number of truancy petitions statewide jumped from near-zero in 1994 to over 16,000 in 1998. The filing rate fluctuated somewhat over the next decade, then dropped by one-fourth from around 16,000 in 2007 to just over 12,000 in 2009. In contrast, filings for ARY and CHINS cases remained steady during the same period. George speculated that the rapid drop in truancy filings in 2009 was related to a 2009 Court of Appeals case, *Bellevue School District vs. ES*, which gave youth with truancy petitions the right to legal representation at their first hearing. The added burden that this placed on school districts may have discouraged them from filing truancy petitions (George, 2011).

**Figure 1** presents the number of truancy petitions filed in Washington State from 2010 through 2014, compared to the combined number of CHINS and ARY cases and the number of juvenile offender (delinquency) cases<sup>5</sup>.



As this time array shows, truancy petition filings continued to decline until 2011, and have since remained steady at about 11,300 per year<sup>6</sup>.

What has changed significantly, however, is the ratio of truancy petitions to juvenile offender case filings, which have declined precipitously from 18,559 in 2010 to 11,590 in 2014, becoming almost equal to the number of truancy filings.

A thorough analysis of the reasons for the rapid decline in juvenile offender court cases is beyond the scope of the present report. However, the situation in Washington State mirrors a nation-wide decline in juvenile arrest rates since the mid-1990s<sup>7</sup>. The combination of the persistent decline in juvenile offender cases and the stable volume of truancy petitions depicted in **Figure 1** suggests that juvenile courts in Washington State are handling a very different type of caseload compared to just a decade ago. This situation has several possible implications. First, assuming that staffing and resources remain the same, the declining

<sup>4</sup> Dependency cases include truancy, “At-Risk Youth” (ARY) and “Children in Need of Services” (CHINS). For more information on dependency cases, refer to the “Washington State Juvenile Nonoffender Benchbook (2011). AOC and the University of Washington, <http://www.kingcounty.gov/-/media/courts/JuvenileCourt/documents/WAJuvenileNonoffenderBenchbook.ashx?la=en>

<sup>5</sup> “Juvenile Offenses” include superior court cases for civil infractions, felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors, non-charge, and transfer for supervision (Source: Superior Court Management Information System (SCOMIS)).

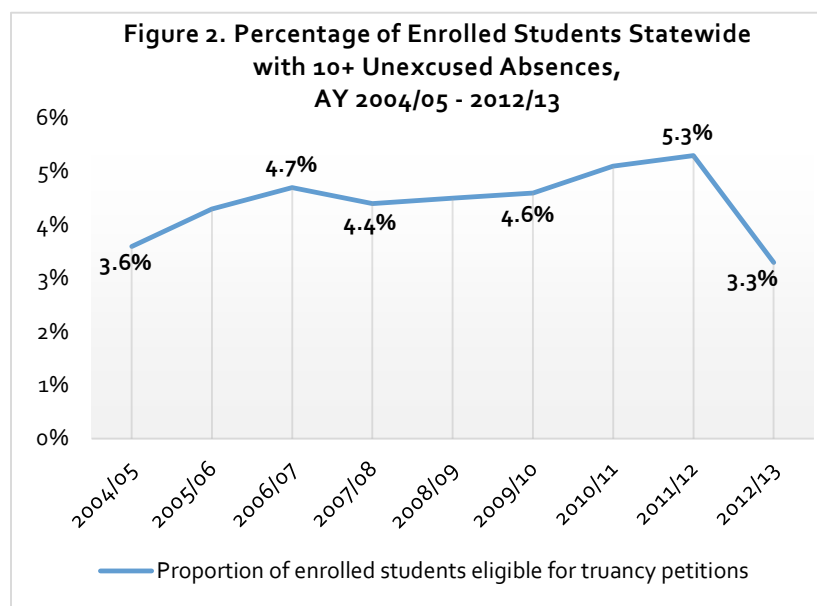
<sup>6</sup> Superior Court Management Information System (SCOMIS).

<sup>7</sup> For the national trend in juvenile offending as reflected in the arrest rate, see page125: <http://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/nr2014/downloads/chapter5.pdf>

offender caseload may free up the resources required to develop more effective, research-informed responses to truancy cases. Second, juvenile courts may be motivated to increase their focus on truancy petition outcomes. Finally, juvenile courts and schools have ample incentive to develop shared, clear and measurable objectives for the truancy petition process.

### Truancy Petitions and Unexcused Absences

The Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to submit annual reports to the state legislature specifying the total number of unexcused



absences each year, the number of students who had either 5 or more unexcused absences in a month or 10 or more in a year, and the number of truancy petitions filed<sup>8</sup>. The data presented in this section were obtained from these reports to the legislature dating from 2004/05 through 2012/13<sup>9</sup>. These figures represent the best available reporting and definitions available at the time. However, as clearly stated in OSPI’s 2013 Truancy Report Update<sup>10</sup>, school

districts across Washington are still in the process of refining their reporting procedures and developing universal and consistently applied definitions of “unexcused” absences.

With this in mind, Figure 2 depicts the percentage of enrolled students statewide from 2004/05 through 2012/13 who had accrued 10 or more unexcused absences in the school year and thereby were subject to mandatory truancy petition filing by law. As the trendline shows, the overall proportion of enrolled students with 10 or more unexcused absences increased slightly, but not dramatically, between 2004/05 (3.6%) and 2011/12 (5.3%) followed by a rapid decline to 3.3% in 2012/13.

Figure 3 provides an estimate of the percentage of students with 10 or more unexcused absences in a given academic year who actually received truancy petitions in that year<sup>11</sup>. The percentage of eligible students who received truancy petitions remained fairly consistent

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2011documents/TruancyReport2010-11.pdf>. RCW 28A.225.151

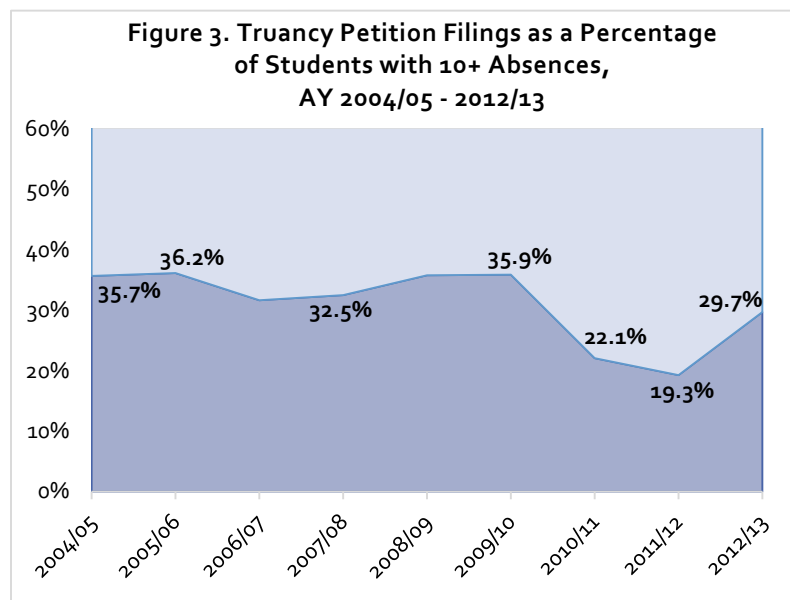
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.k12.wa.us/GATE/Truancy/default.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2013documents/TruancyReport2013.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> This data should be interpreted with caution, however, as reported truancy petitions filings likely represented all filings rather than number of students who received petitions. It is recommended that these figures be considered an estimate only.

between 2004/05 (35.7%) and 2009/10 (35.9%). The percentage of petitions filed per students eligible then decreased rapidly to 22.1% in 2010/11 and 19.3% in 2011/12, corresponding to the 2009 requirement for legal representation referred to previously. The overall percentage rose again to 29.7% during the 2012/13 academic year.

In sum, data from both the courts and the schools indicate that the number of truancy petition filings across the state remained relatively stable between 2004 and 2009, at which point the



numbers decreased rapidly. While the recent decrease may be due, in part, to an actual decrease in unexcused absences overall, at no point during the last 10 years have more than 36% of the most chronically truant students received truancy petitions. This fact raises a number of interesting questions: Why do some chronically absent students receive petitions and others do not? What roles do the school districts and juvenile courts play in this process? Finally, how can families, schools,

courts, and communities ensure that all students remain engaged and attain success in school? The present report cannot provide comprehensive answers to all of these questions, but aims to provide some direction to future researchers and to those willing to explore solutions to chronic truancy.

## Local Responses to Truancy

The Becca Laws are valid across the state, but each county is free to interpret the statute and develop its truancy programs based upon local resources and philosophies (Clark County, 2013). The result is a wide variety of practices and policies to deal with petitioned truant youth across juvenile court jurisdictions as well as school districts in Washington State (Klima, Miller & Nunlist, 2009a; Klima, Miller & Nunlist, 2009b).

School districts differ widely in their rates of truancy petition filings, the availability of truancy interventions pre- or post-filing, and until very recently, in definitions of unexcused absences (Klima, et al, 2009b). Furthermore, some school districts have very low truancy rates (defined as the percentage of students with 10 or more unexcused absences in a year) while others have large numbers of chronically truant students. Finally, schools and school districts may or may not have specific practices and programs to address chronic truancy, and such programs may be short-lived because of funding constraints or administrative issues.

Historically, once a truancy petition was filed the student, parents, and usually a school staff member were required to attend a fact-finding hearing in court before a judicial officer. If the court assumed jurisdiction, judicial officers could require the family to attend a mandatory educational workshop on the consequences of chronic truancy, order substance abuse testing, require the school to adjust the educational program of the student, refer the family to a community truancy board, or even issue a small fine. If a student continued to be truant after the initial petition was filed and s/he had been ordered by the judge to attend school, either the district or court could file a motion for contempt of the court order. At this point, courts could impose sanctions, even including “doing time” in a secure juvenile detention facility.

Washington State’s truancy laws now recommend that schools and courts include interventions to address barriers to school attendance, with specific reference to community truancy boards (CTB). As a result, many courts have modified the process so that the truancy petition is immediately “stayed” in order to provide the student with an opportunity to improve his/her attendance with the support of an established truancy intervention program (Klima, et al., 2009a).

### Community Truancy Boards (CTBs)

Recent research shows that well-designed truancy intervention programs can substantially improve graduation rates among truant youth while protecting them from risk factors that contribute to both truancy and juvenile delinquency (Beem, 2002; Pennsylvania Truancy Taskforce, n.d.). The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) formally supports truancy interventions that involve ongoing partnerships with schools, courts, communities, parents, and students, a framework that has proven effective at addressing truancy in a variety of settings (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). OJJDP’s preferred truancy intervention framework includes the following key elements:

1. Active parental involvement.
2. Sanctions for schools that do not monitor truancy.
3. Incentives for families to ensure their child’s attendance.
4. School-based efforts to address the root causes of truancy.
5. The active involvement of local law enforcement.

As mentioned, the Becca Laws encourage schools and courts to have CTBs to serve petitioned truant youth. The definition of a community truancy board in Washington State statute is very similar to the OJJDP recommended model, as follows (RCW 28A.225.025):

*(1) ..... "community truancy board" means a board composed of members of the local community in which the child attends school. Juvenile courts may establish and operate community truancy boards [or] ...a school district may establish and operate a community truancy board under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court....Duties of a*

*community truancy board shall include, but not be limited to, recommending methods for improving school attendance such as assisting the parent or the child to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes for the absences or suggesting to the school district that the child enroll in another school, an alternative education program, an education center, a skill center, a dropout prevention program, or another public or private educational program.*

*(2) The legislature finds that utilization of community truancy boards, or other diversion units that fulfill a similar function, is the preferred means of intervention when preliminary methods of notice and parent conferences and taking appropriate steps to eliminate or reduce unexcused absences have not been effective in securing the child's attendance at school. **The legislature intends to encourage and support the development and expansion of community truancy boards and other diversion programs which are effective in promoting school attendance and preventing the need for more intrusive intervention by the court.***

There are a number of well-designed, well-run community truancy boards currently operating in Washington State juvenile courts (for example, see Clark County, 2013; Spokane County Juvenile Court, n.d.; and VanWormer and Banks, 2013). A recently-published evaluation of the Spokane-based West Valley Community Truancy Board (WVCTB) by Strand and Lovrich (2014) described the program's philosophy as follows: "The program is driven by a philosophical commitment to precede a punitive, court-focused and formalized status offense process with one that conceptualizes excessive school absences as a *community problem to be addressed with the active assistance of school, juvenile court, family, and community resource persons in the school setting*" (p. 138). The WVCTB uses a variety of evidence-based practices including the well-studied and commercially available *Check and Connect* program (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair & Lehr, 2004), folded into an intensive case management process involving school, courts, families, and community members. According to Strand and Lovrich, this cross-system integration is in accordance with the idea that truancy is the product of risk factors operating across a variety of domains, often simultaneously, and that effective interventions must address each of these domains at once. Another foundational principle of the WVCTB is the concept of *restorative justice*, which focuses on repairing any harm done rather than on punishment.

The authors found that truant youth who successfully participated in the WVCTB were significantly more likely to graduate from high school and/or complete their GED compared to a matched comparison group. The authors concluded that community truancy boards in combination with the social support provided by *Check and Connect* and an emphasis on restorative justice can significantly improve the odds of school success among high school-aged truant youth (Strand & Lovrich, 2014).

While CTBs or variations thereof are both highly recommended and backed by sound evidence, they are not yet available in all juvenile court jurisdictions, much less in all school districts in the state (Klima et al, 2009b). The present report provides a description of what truancy programs



are currently available (as of 2014), as well as the juvenile courts' perspective on the challenges that the courts often face in implementing such programs.

## An Introduction to the Current Report: Court Practices and Student Outcomes

This report presents new evidence on truancy from two very different sources: a recent statewide survey of truancy practices in juvenile courts, and a dataset containing over five years of linked court and education data for petitioned truants. Together, these studies describe the common educational pathways of truant youths, both before and after court contact, and provide an overview of the current range of juvenile court responses to truancy.

Recent developments in cross-agency data sharing in Washington State have only recently made it possible to track the educational and career progress of court-involved youth prior to their court contact and afterwards, through college and entry into the workforce. Section II presents the results of an analysis of education data from the Educational Research and Data Center (ERDC) P-20 education data warehouse, linked to juvenile court data from the WSSCR Court Contact and Recidivism Database (CCRD). The result is a longitudinal view of court and education outcomes for all students who received truancy petitions in Washington State during the 2010/11 academic year. This includes a profile of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the entire population of petitioned truants, as well as academic progress and juvenile court contact for the subset in grades 9 through 12 at the time. These findings demonstrate the power of integrated data to answer questions that were previously out-of-reach, while providing a glimpse into the myriad educational challenges facing truant youth in Washington State.

Section III presents the results of the 2014 statewide survey of truancy practices in Washington State juvenile courts. The survey results depict a broad range of local truancy practices including CTBs, influenced by factors including but not limited to funding, local resources, demographics, and the cooperation of school districts. This section includes a comparison of truancy trends across jurisdictions with different types of truancy interventions.

Section IV concludes the report with a discussion of effective policy development over time, recommendations for improving the performance of programs aimed at reducing truancy, a review of the major limitations of the current study, and suggestions for further research.

## SECTION II: Demographics, Academic Achievement and Court Recidivism among Petitioned Truant Students

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### Integrated Court and Education Data

The data for the present study were drawn from the Juvenile Court and Education dataset, linking individual-level juvenile court data from the WSSCR with K-12 and post-secondary education data provided by the ERDC of the Office of Financial Management (OFM)<sup>12</sup>. Housed in WSSCR, this dataset is the product of a memorandum of understanding between the WSSCR and the ERDC and is compliant with all regulations and codes governing the protection of juvenile court and education data. The current dataset is de-identified to comply with existing regulations. However, as the agency responsible for linking cross-agency data, the ERDC maintains a secure crosswalk to provide for continual updates.

Originally funded by a 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act grant, ERDC created the “P-20W” data warehouse, containing individual-level education data from pre-K through higher education, workforce data, and data from other state agencies. The P-20W data warehouse is growing continually as more agency data are added, and is an invaluable resource for researchers, evaluators, and policy-makers. The creation of the Juvenile Court and Education dataset in late 2014 marks the first time that longitudinal educational data have been linked to juvenile court data for all individuals who have been charged in juvenile courts in Washington State.

The current version of the Juvenile Court and Education dataset contains a complete history of court referrals for all individuals ever referred to a juvenile court, regardless of outcome, in Washington State between 2005 and 2014, inclusive (254,778 individuals, total). The ERDC was able to link 225,470 (88.5%) of these individuals to the K-12 data archives and 72,877 (28.6%) to the public higher education data archives. The following education data were then transferred back to WSSCR:

- K-12 data from the 2004/05 academic year through the 2013/2014 academic year, including but not limited to all enrollment and enrollment spans, test scores, programmatic information such as special education, bilingual education and Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) eligibility, standardized test scores, grade point averages, credits earned, and high school outcome (graduation, for example)<sup>13</sup>.

Attendance data including unexcused and excused absences, as well as discipline data, were frequently unreliable prior to implementation of a standardized reporting protocol

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.erd.c.wa.gov/>

<sup>13</sup> The source of all K-12 data is the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) (AY2009/10 forward) and the Core Student Record System (CSRS) for AY2004/05 through 2008/09). <http://www.k12.wa.us/CEDARS/default.aspx>

in the 2012/13 academic year. Future truancy reports will benefit greatly from these recent improvements in data quality. However, the present report could not incorporate either discipline data or unexcused absences.

- Data for community and technical colleges from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) from 2001 through 2014<sup>14</sup>. This data archive includes enrollments and completions for all degrees and certificates issued by the SBCTC, and is the source for the statewide database containing all successful completions of the General Educational Development (GED) test.
- Data for public four-year postsecondary institutions from the OFM's Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES)<sup>15</sup>. This data archive includes detailed information on enrollment and degree completion from the late 1990s onward.

## Methodology

### The Study Population

The data prepared for the present project included linked court and education records for all youth who had received either a truancy petition or truancy contempt referral from January 1, 2010 through May 31, 2014, and who were matched to either the K12 or higher education data<sup>16</sup>, for a total of 42,792 individuals. To allow for a 3-year follow-up period, the current analysis focused on the subpopulation of 10,747 students who received a truancy petition or contempt referral during the 2010/11 academic year, or from September 1, 2010 through August 31, 2011. It was not feasible to create a matched comparison group of students who had not received truancy petitions. However, where possible, the sample statistics were compared to the statewide student statistics for the same academic year<sup>17</sup>.

### Data

Available demographic data included the month and year of birth, gender, race, and ethnicity. Demographic data were available in both the court and education databases, but the education data was found to be a more reliable source for race and ethnicity than the court data.

Education data used in the present analysis spanned the academic years 2009/10 through 2013/14, and consisted of school and district entry and exit dates, grade level, Grade Point Average (GPA) at the end of the academic year, standardized test scores, credits earned at the end of the academic year, flags for enrollment in special education, bilingual education, migrant

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.erdcdata.wa.gov/CTCReportsP2oTechNotes.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/hied/dashboard/overview.html>

<sup>16</sup> For this particular population, 5.5% were not matched to any education data. These were eliminated from the analysis because there are many possible reasons for this, including administrative error.

<sup>17</sup> <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State&year=2013-14>

services, homelessness, Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), and “final withdrawal” (graduation or drop-out, for example). Variables such as credits and GPA were consistently available only for students in grades 9 or above, and occasionally available in grades 7 or 8. The higher education data sources included indicators of earning a GED, technical certificate, or associates degree from a two-year institution, or a bachelor’s degree or higher from a four-year public institution.

The juvenile court data used included the number of truancy petitions received through May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014, the number of CHINS or ARY petitions through 2013, flags for any juvenile offender case through 2013, and flags for detention episodes for truancy-related offenses and detention episodes for any other reason, by quarter, through 2013.

Truancy contempt information was used in conjunction with truancy petitions to define the study population. However, contempt data were not as reliable in earlier years as truancy petition data, so consequently the number of truancy contempt referrals were not included in the descriptive analyses.

## Results

### Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Petitioned Truant Youth

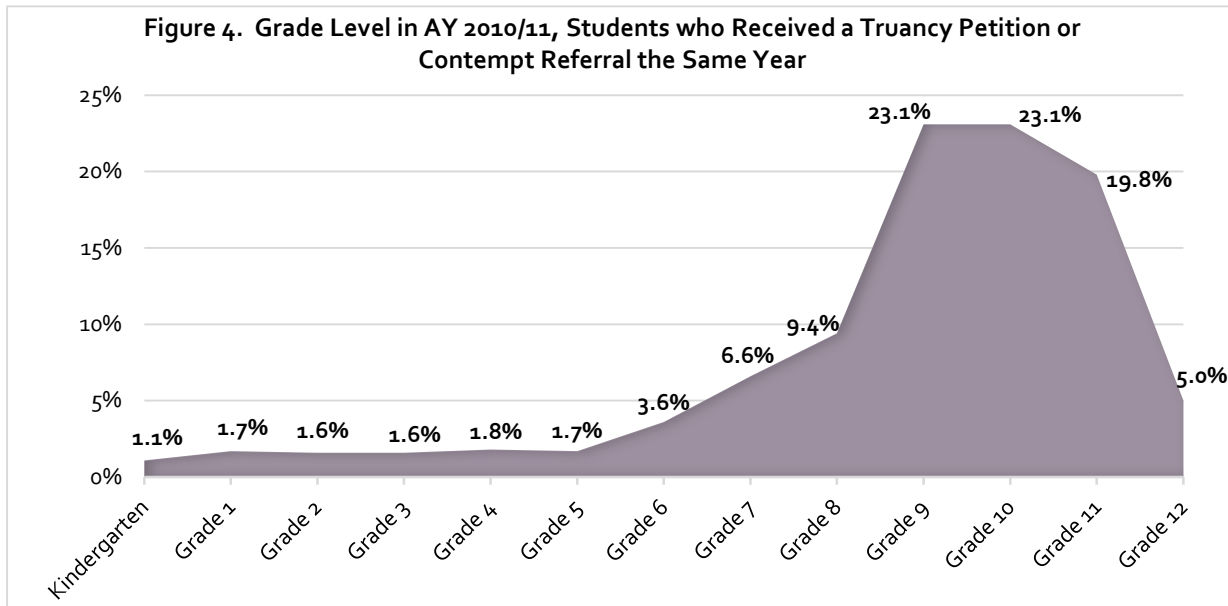
#### Age, Gender and Grade Level

Males were somewhat over-represented in the 2010/11 petitioned truant population, at 54.4% of petitioned truant youth compared to 51.5% of the statewide student population.

	<b>Total- Truant Population</b>	<b>% Truant Population</b>	<b>% Statewide Population</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,747</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	1,041,892
• <b>Male</b>	5,856	54.4%	51.5%
• <b>Female</b>	4,891	45.6	48.5
<b>Age Group</b>			
5 to 7 years	268	2.5	NA
7 to 9 years	330	3.1	NA
9 to 11 years	351	3.3	NA
11 to 13 years	950	8.8	NA
13 to 15 years	2,599	24.2	NA
15 years +	6,249	58.1	NA

The average age of the petitioned students was 14.7 years on October 1, 2010. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the petitioned truants were 15 years of age or older, followed by 24% in the 13 to 15 year category. However, it should be noted that much younger students do receive truancy petitions: almost 6% of the truant population were under 9 years of age ([Table 1](#)).

Figure 4 presents the relative percentage of 2010/11 petitioned truants by grade level. As this display of grade level figures shows, less than 10% of the petitioned truants were in kindergarten through grade 5, and the overall proportion by grade level remained steady through grade 5. The relative proportion of truant students increased rapidly during the middle school years, jumping from 3.6% in grade 6 to 9.4% for grade 8. The early high school years brought another dramatic increase to 23.1% in grades 9 and 10, dropping thereafter. This suggests that students are most likely to exhibit truant behavior between grades 6 and 10, or, conversely, that schools are more likely to submit truancy petitions for this age group, or both.

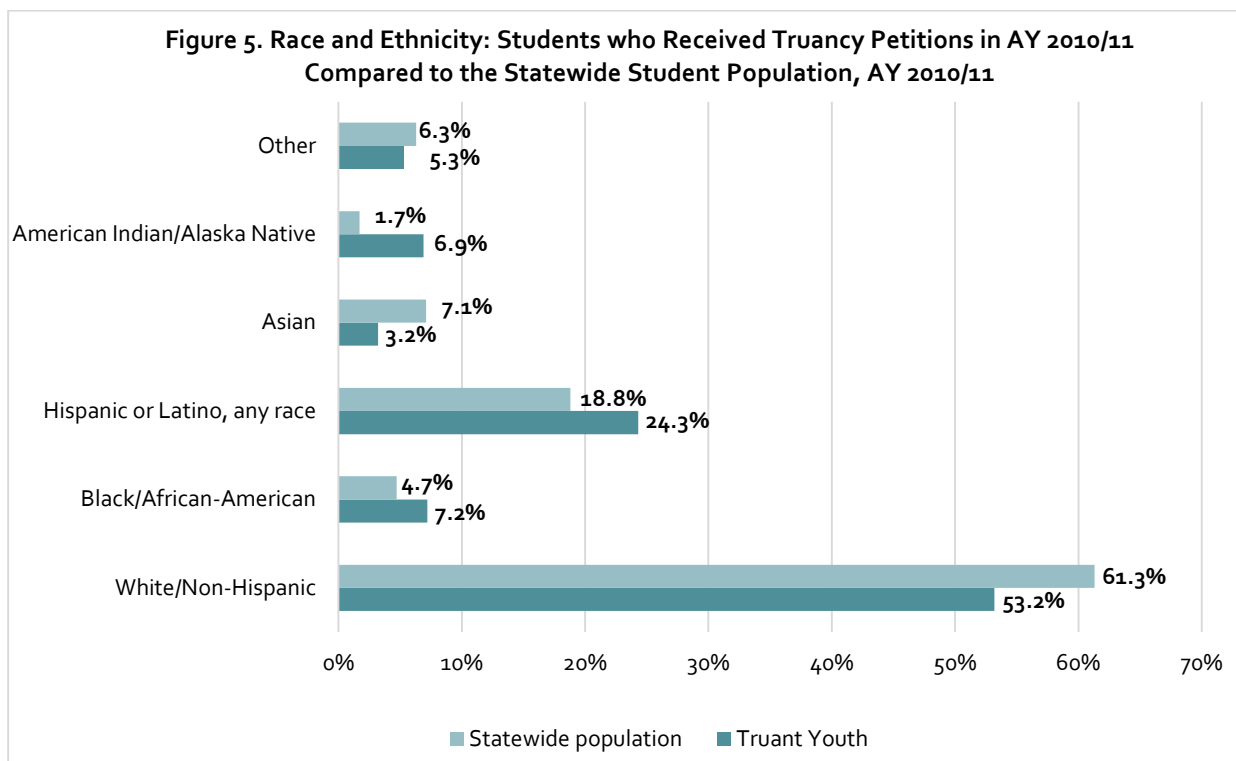


There are several plausible explanations for the decreased prevalence of petitioned truants in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. As will be shown in a later section, the present study found that many truant students simply drop out after the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, resulting in fewer chronic truants in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Further, as of the 2010/11 academic year, students 18 years of age or older were not eligible for truancy petitions (the minimum age limit was further reduced to 16 in 2012, as mentioned in the previous section). Given these factors, it is not surprising that so few 12<sup>th</sup> graders were included in the 2010/11 truant cohort.

What is clear from this pattern of petitioning is that higher-risk students often have their first contact with the courts for truancy-related issues between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. School engagement in grades 6 and 7 has been identified as a critical time for drop-out prevention efforts (Balfanz, et al, 2010; Celio, 2009). While academic failure often begins as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students who struggle in school begin to show consistent patterns of poor attendance in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade (Nichols, 2003).

## Race and Ethnicity

There were distinct racial and ethnic differences between the petitioned truant population and the general student population (see [Figure 5](#)). Hispanic/Latino students were over-represented in the truant population (24.3% compared to 18.8% in the general student population), as were Blacks/African Americans (7.2% compared to 4.7%). American Indian/Alaska Native students, however, show by far the greatest over-representation in the truant population compared to their numbers in the general student population - 6.9% compared to 1.7%, more than a three-fold higher rate of incidence.



## Educational Services

For insight into the relationship between truancy and social and economic conditions, petitioned truant students were compared with the general student population on the use of five common and universally-available educational support services: migrant services, homeless services, transitional bilingual services, special education, and FRPL (see [Table 2](#)).

Migrant students are over-represented in the petitioned truant population (2.6% compared to 1.7% of the general student population) while transitional bilingual students are under-represented (6.8% compared to 8.7%). There is not enough information to interpret these somewhat contradictory findings. The categories of “migrant” and “transitional bilingual” (English-language learner) may include the children of migrant farm workers and the non-

English-speaking children of well-educated skilled workers, for example; two populations with very different social and economic needs.

	<b>Truant</b>	<b>All</b>
	<b>10,747</b>	1,041,892
<b>School-based Special Services</b>		
• Migrant	2.6%	1.7%
• Transitional Bilingual	6.8%	8.7%
• Special Education	19.8%	13.1%
• Homeless	7.1%	2.5% <sup>19</sup>
• Free or Reduced Price Lunch	74.1%	43.7%

The education data includes a flag for “homelessness” as part of the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, a federal law designed to promote educational stability for homeless youth<sup>20</sup>. The law was based on strong evidence for an association between residential instability and school failure (refer to Culhane, et

al., 2011 for a complete review). In the present study, petitioned truants were more than twice as likely as their peers to qualify for educational services under the McKinney-Vento Act (7.1% compared to 2.5%).

Petitioned truants were also significantly more likely to be eligible for special education services (almost 20% compared to 13% of the general student population). Students who receive special educational services are disproportionately likely to experience school failure, as well as severe disciplinary actions such as suspensions and expulsions. These events often contribute to disengagement in school and subsequent truancy (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Krezmien, 2008; Skiba, et al., 2006).

Another dramatic difference in educational service use between petitioned truant students and the general student population was in the relative eligibility rates for FRPL, a common proxy for income level in educational research. About 74% of the petitioned truants were eligible for FRPL and therefore can be categorized as low-income, compared to only 43.7% of the general student population in the same year.

## Juvenile Court Involvement

### Truancy Petitions

Many of the 2010/11 petitioned truants had previous truancy referrals, and many more would go on to receive additional truancy petitions during the 3-year follow-up period. [Figure 6](#) presents the percentage of the 2010/11 petitioned truants who had received previous (prior

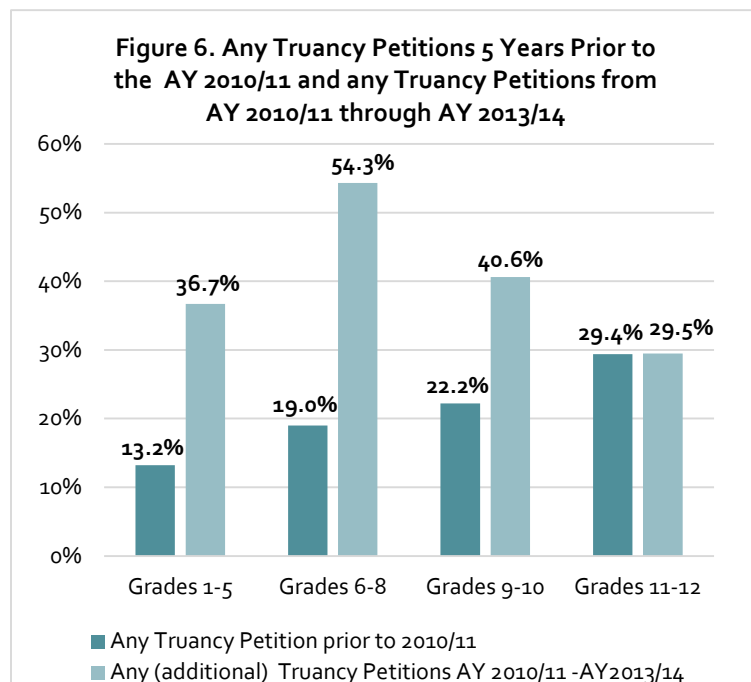
<sup>18</sup> Based on October 2010 and May, 2011 counts,

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State&year=2010-11&yrs=2010-11>

<sup>19</sup> OPSI reported 26,049 homeless students in 2010/11, or 2.5% of the statewide student population.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Communications/PressReleases2013/HomelessStudents.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/AssistanceAct.aspx>.



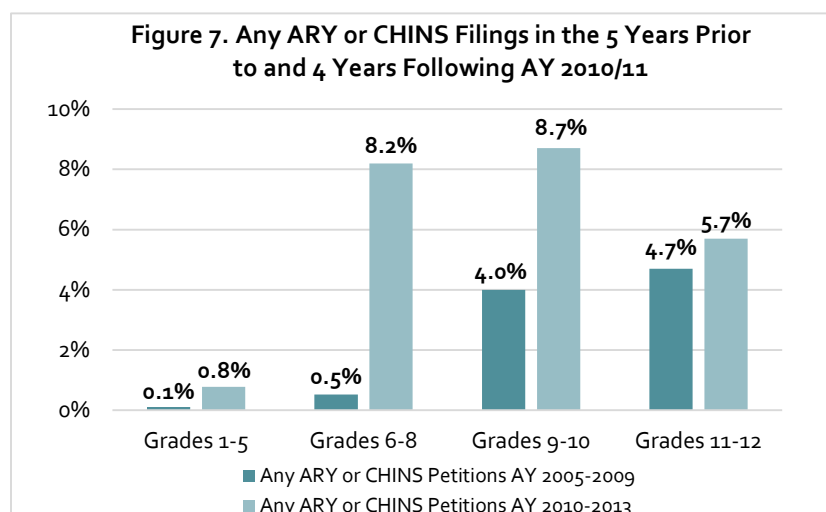
to 2010/11) and subsequent truancy petitions, grouped by grade level in 2010/11<sup>21</sup>.

Nineteen percent (19%) of the students in grades 6 to 8 at the time of their 2010/11 truancy petition had a history of previous petitions, and 54% would receive at least one additional truancy petition before the end of the 2013/14 school year. The older students were less likely than 6-8 graders to receive additional petitions (40.6% for 9-10 graders), as were the younger students (36.7%).

The extent of truancy recidivism, including the fact that over one-half of petitioned truant students in grades 6 through 8 would receive at least one additional truancy petition during the following three academic years, has obvious implications for truancy interventions. In particular, these results highlight the challenges associated with finding, implementing, and sustaining effective responses to middle-grades truancy.

The extent of truancy recidivism,

### Other Status Offenses



Section I touched on the relative rarity of CHiNS and ARY petitions compared to truancy petitions. The total number of ARY and CHiNS petitions filed in 2014 was 1,742, or less than one-fifth of one percent of the total statewide K-12 student population in 2013/14. The reasons for this are complex and covered elsewhere (for example, Gold, et al., 2014).

However, ARY and CHiNS petitions are positively correlated with truancy, and are more likely to follow rather than precede a truancy petition. As is shown in [Figure 7](#), 8% of the petitioned

<sup>21</sup> The relationship between grade level in 2010/11 and subsequent truancy petitions was highly statistically significant,  $X^2 = 109.3$  (df = 12)  $p < .0001$ .

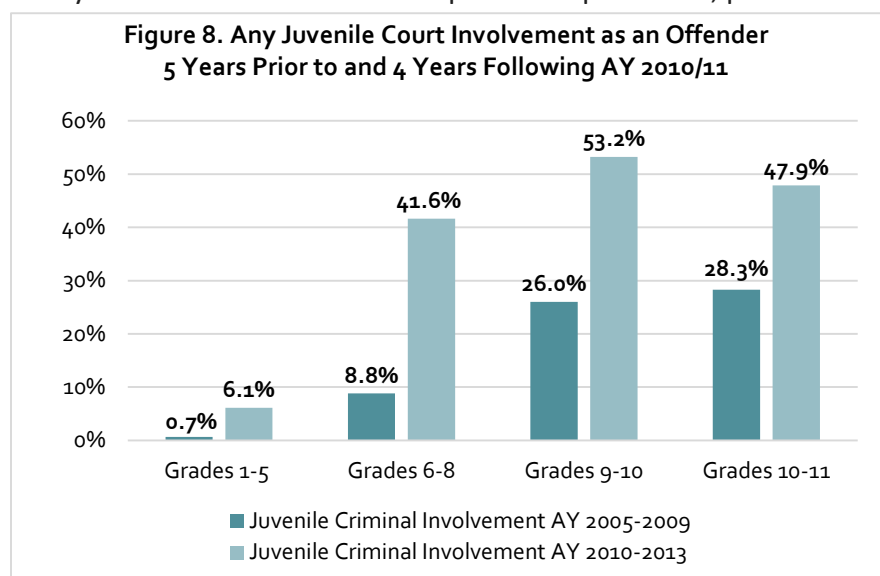


truant 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders received ARY or CHINS petitions during the following 3-4 years, as did 8.7% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

### Juvenile Offender Court Involvement

Truancy referrals are also associated with prior and subsequent juvenile offender court contact. More than one-quarter of the high-school aged petitioned truants had already been charged in the juvenile courts as offenders. Forty-two percent (42%) of 6 to 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 53% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders would be referred to the juvenile court for as juvenile offenders at some point during the 3-4 years following their petition (Figure 8).

These results suggest that truancy petitions are more likely to precede than to follow juvenile offender court involvement. However, in the words of one local juvenile court administrator, “If a youth was a truant and then placed on probation, probation violations trump the truancy”<sup>22</sup>. In this jurisdiction at least, a youth on probation who is also truant will receive a probation violation, not a truancy petition. What can be concluded from the present findings, therefore, is that truancy and juvenile offenses often co-occur, not that one typically predicts or even precedes the other.



truant will receive a probation violation, not a truancy petition. What can be concluded from the present findings, therefore, is that truancy and juvenile offenses often co-occur, not that one typically predicts or even precedes the other.

In his 2011 truancy report, George reported similar findings, but was able to go a step further and link truancy, ARY and CHINS petitions, and juvenile offender involvement to patterns of maladaptive family relationships, including childhood trauma. The 2011 report concluded that service providers must be aware of the significant and complex needs of these youth and design interventions accordingly. The present results echo George’s 2011 findings in that truancy is often a symptom of complex and long-standing problems, and requires interventions that can identify and address these underlying causes.

<sup>22</sup> Source: Informal correspondence, Juvenile court administrator.

## Educational Achievement and Court Involvement among High School-Aged Petitioned Truant Youth

A subset of older youth in the petitioned truant population was used to identify academic characteristics and outcomes for petitioned truants, alone and in relation to pre- and post-truancy court involvement. For these purposes, a total of 7,634 petitioned students who met the following criteria were included in the subset:

1. Had a truancy petition or truancy contempt referral at any point during the 2010/11 academic year (September 1, 2010 through August 31, 2011).
2. Were enrolled in school and identified as being in grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 at any point during the 2010/11 academic year.

### Timing and Frequency of Truancy Petitions

Since most of the students, particularly the younger ones, received their first truancy petition in 2010/11, it is important to note that petitioned truant high school students are up to one year older, on average, than their peers.

Truancy Petitions	Grade level in 2010/11				
	ALL	9 <sup>TH</sup>	10 <sup>TH</sup>	11 <sup>TH</sup>	12 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,634</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>2,485</b>	<b>2,132</b>	<b>534</b>
<i>*Average age on 10/1/10</i>	<b>16.0</b>	15.1	15.9	16.7	17.4
<b>Prior to AY 2010/11<sup>23</sup></b>					
None	66.5%	72.3%	66.1%	63.0%	55.2%
One	23.1%	19.7%	23.8%	25.1%	28.1%
Two	7.6%	5.6%	7.9%	8.6%	11.8%
Three or more	2.7%	2.4%	2.2%	3.2%	4.9%
<b>AY 2010/11 –AY 2013/14<sup>24</sup></b>					
One	65.1%	58.6%	63.1%	72.9%	73.2%
Two	28.5%	31.7%	30.2%	23.7%	25.3%
Three or more	6.4%	9.7%	6.8%	3.4%	1.5%

Washington State regulations require that a student be at least 6 years of age on midnight of August 31 in the year they enter 1<sup>st</sup> grade<sup>25</sup>. A student who meets these requirements and does not repeat a grade through grade 8 would therefore be no older than 14.16 years on October 1 of their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. However, petitioned truant 9<sup>th</sup> graders averaged 15.1 years at this point, suggesting that they are

more likely to have repeated earlier grades (Table 3).

About 30% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders who received a truancy petition in academic year 2010/11 would go on to receive one more truancy referral before the end AY 2014/15, while 9.7% and 6.8% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, respectively, would receive two or more additional petitions (Table 3). These percentages do not account for the number of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade petitioned truants who would drop out of high school long before the end of the follow-up period, a topic to be covered in a later section.

<sup>23</sup> Through July 31, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> August 1, 2010 through May 31, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/Parents/EnrollingKindergarten.aspx>.

Age at the time of the first truancy petition was estimated by calculating the students' age on October 1 of the year of the first truancy petition, as indicated by the juvenile court records. For the 152 students with truancy petitions earlier than 2004, one year was subtracted from their age on October 1, 2004.

Table 4 presents the average age at the time of their first truancy petition for the entire petitioned high school cohort, broken down by grade level in 2010/11. Ninth grade students were younger, on average, at the time of their first truancy petitions than were 12<sup>th</sup> graders. However, while these differences were expected they are nonetheless instructive.

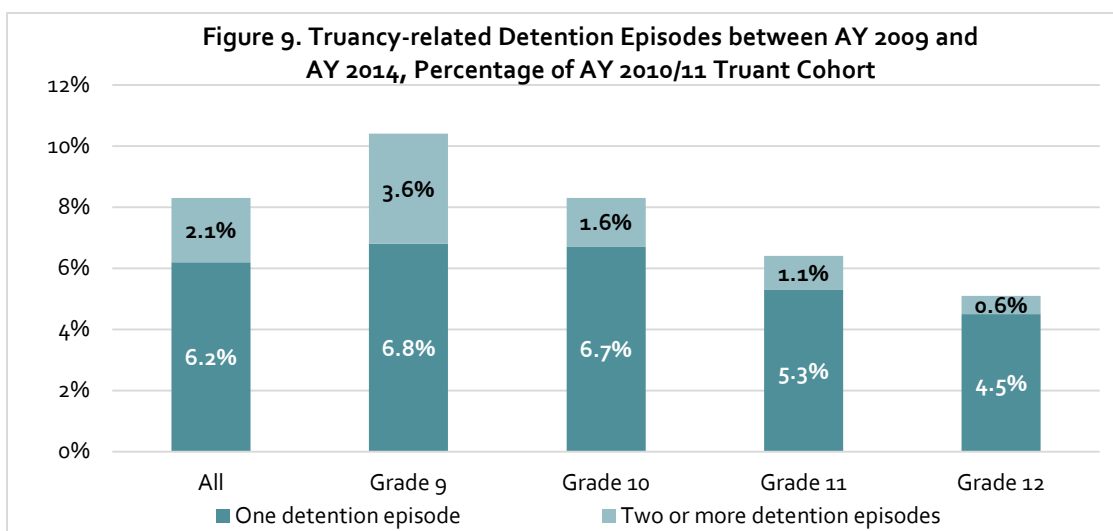
Age at first petition	Grade level in AY 2010/11				
	All	9 <sup>TH</sup>	10 <sup>TH</sup>	11 <sup>TH</sup>	12 <sup>TH</sup>
• Age 7 -10	3.0%	3.5%	3.3%	2.4%	2.2%
• Age 11-12	4.0%	5.4%	4.1%	2.5%	2.2%
• Age 13	5.8%	7.2%	6.2%	4.1%	3.4%
• Age 14	11.1%	19.0%	8.5%	6.9%	3.4%
• Age 15	24.6%	41.7%	22.2%	10.6%	12.0%
• Age 16 -18	51.5%	23.2%	55.6%	73.3%	76.8%
<b>Total number</b>	<b>7,634</b>	2,483	2,485	2,132	534

Over 12% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 11% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders with previous truancy petitions received their first truancy petitions between the ages of 11 and 13, compared to 6.6% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders and 5.6% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders. This suggests that students who are chronically truant in middle school or early high school may be more likely

to drop out of school before the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Further support for the “attrition” hypothesis includes the following: 1) The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade petitioned students were closer in age to their non-truant peers than were the younger truants, a finding that can only be attributed to increased dropout rates among the truant youth; and 2) although 30% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders went on to receive subsequent truancy petitions, barely 23% of the 12<sup>th</sup> graders were younger than 16 when they were first petitioned (Tables 3 and 4).

#### Truancy-related Detention Rates

Figure 9 presents the percentage of the high school cohort, by grade, who were sentenced either once or more than once to a juvenile detention facility on truancy charges between January 1 of 2009 and May 31, 2014. Over 8% of the entire cohort, or 630 students, had one or more truancy-related detention stays during that period. Among the 9<sup>th</sup> graders alone, however, over 10% would eventually serve time in detention for truancy. Students with a serious history of truancy, including detention, will likely have dropped out by grades 11 and 12. For this reason, 10% is the better estimate of the overall proportion of petitioned truants who will eventually serve time in a detention facility on a truancy contempt charge.



### Other Juvenile Court Contact on Offender Matters

Truancy is more likely to co-occur with than to either precede or follow juvenile offending behavior, if the 2010/11 petitioned truant population is any indication. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the petitioned truant high school cohort came into contact with the juvenile courts as offenders (non-truancy or other status offense) between January 1, 2005 and May 31, 2014. Regardless of grade level, petitioned truant students were far more likely to have been referred as juvenile offenders in 2010 or 2011 (38%), right around the time they also received a truancy petition, than in either the two years prior (27%) or the two years that followed (31%) (Table 5). Four percent (4%) served time in short-term detention for non-truancy-related offenses between 2009 and 2013, inclusive, including over 5% of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

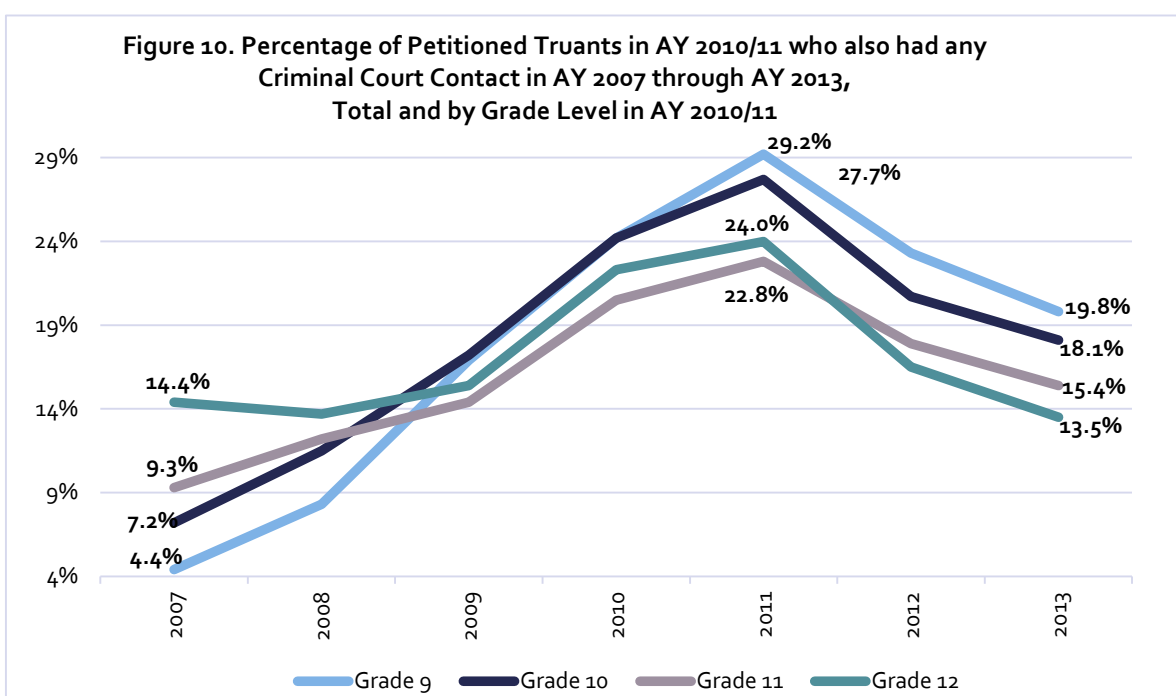
	All	Grade level in AY 2010/11			
		9 <sup>TH</sup>	10 <sup>TH</sup>	11 <sup>TH</sup>	12 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>Any offender court case, AY 2005 to mid-2014</b>	<b>57.8%</b>	<b>59.2%</b>	<b>58.7%</b>	<b>55.7%</b>	<b>56.0%</b>
• Any offender court case, AY 2005 -2009	<b>26.8%</b>	24.1%	27.8%	27.1%	33.3%
• Any offender court case, AY 2010 or 2011	<b>38.2%</b>	40.8%	39.4%	34.5%	35.8%
• Any offender court case, AY 2012 or 2013	<b>30.7%</b>	33.9%	31.5%	27.8%	24.0%
<b>Detention for juvenile offenses, AY 2009-2013</b>					
• None	<b>96.0%</b>	94.9%	95.3%	97.6%	98.3%
• One or more episodes	<b>4.0%</b>	5.2%	4.8%	2.5%	1.7%
<b>Total number of petitioned students</b>	<b>7,634</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>2,485</b>	<b>2,132</b>	<b>534</b>

Figure 10 presents the percentage of the high school petitioned truant cohort who were charged with juvenile offenses each year from 2007 through 2013, in total and by grade level in

2010/11. As this time series display shows, juvenile offenses spiked for the entire group right around the time of the 2010/11 truancy petition, followed by a steady decline thereafter.

What is also clear from the trend lines in [Figure 10](#) is that younger students who are truant are more likely than older students to also be engaging in offending behavior. Almost 30% of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 28% of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade petitioned truants were referred to court with a juvenile offense in 2011 compared to 23% to 24% of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. While a substantial number (20%) of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders were charged with a juvenile offense in 2013, the overall trend showed a decrease in juvenile offenses following the 2010/11 truancy petition.

The current data only included students charged in juvenile courts, not those charged as adults (which would include all of those over the age of 18). Many among the cohort would have



turned 18 long before the end of the follow-up period. It is likely, therefore, that the current data **underestimate** court involvement on criminal matters during the follow-up years, especially for the older students. However, the *consistency of the trend data* indicates that truancy is likely a part of a larger set of challenges that increase the likelihood of concurrent court involvement on offender matters.

### Academic Performance

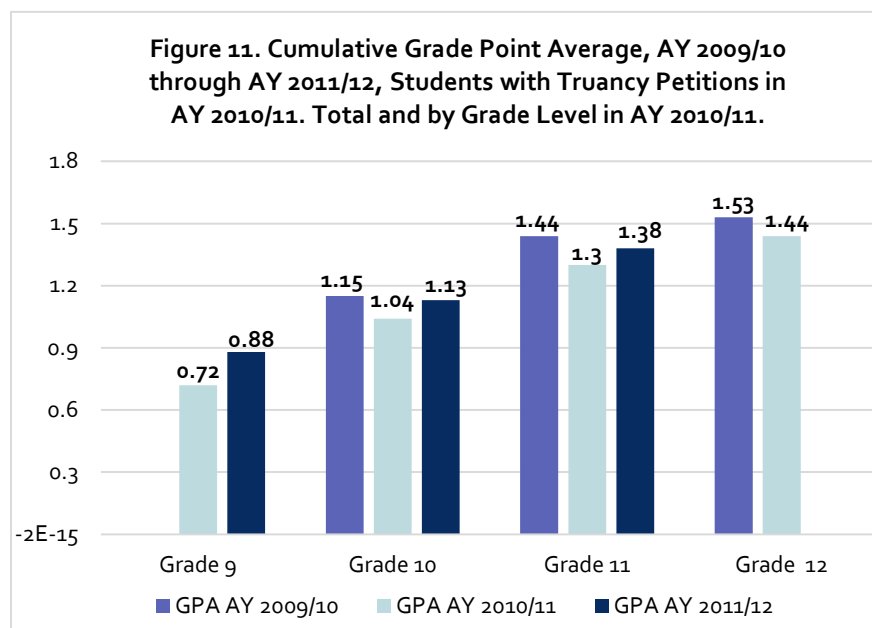
Academic progress and outcomes over time for the petitioned truant high school students were based on the following indicators: enrollment in school (versus completion or drop out), end-of-year GPA, end-of-year credits earned, and completions including high school graduation,

GED completion, higher education degree, and high school dropout<sup>26</sup>. Standardized test score data were left out of the current analysis, as these are highly correlated with high school completion, and as such did not add to the available information. As mentioned, the K-12 education data did not include a valid estimate of unexcused absences that could be tracked across time, since consistent and comparable statewide data on unexcused absences were not available until 2012/13.

### Course Completion and Grade Point Average

Petitioned truants, as a group, do not perform well academically. School performance the school year before, the year of, and the year following the 2010/11 truancy petition was estimated using the commonly-used measures of cumulative GPA (ranging from 0 through 4.0) and course credits earned. Used together, these measures provide the best indication from the available data of whether or not a student is on track to graduate.

The truancy petition year was marked by a decrease in academic performance from the prior year for the whole group, as indicated by average GPA. While the average rose again slightly the following year, this did not include students who had dropped out prior to the 2011/12 school year (a substantial number, as will be seen).



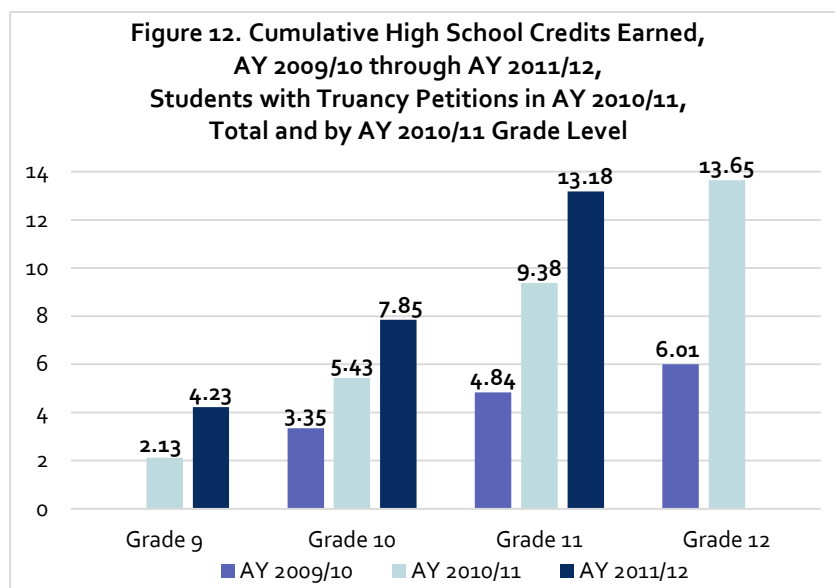
“Credits earned” (course credits) is a common indicator of academic performance and has been identified as an “early-warning” dropout indicator for students as young as 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). High school courses are typically worth 0.5

credits per semester, and students take six courses per semester, for a total of six credits per year. They earn the credit if they receive a grade of “D” or higher. Available research on the early warning indicators of dropout suggests that students who have earned less than six credits at the end of their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year are at high risk of dropping out of school.

The average 9<sup>th</sup> grader petitioned truant in 2010/11 fell far short of 6 credits at the end of his or her freshman year in high school (see [Figure 12](#)). They averaged 2.13 credits at the end of their

<sup>26</sup> Data sources included K-12 data (OSPI), postsecondary degree completion data from Washington State public 4-year institutions (PCHEES) and public 2-year community and technical colleges and GED completions (SBCTC).

9<sup>th</sup> grade year, and only 4.23 credits, or an additional 2.10 credits, by the end of the following academic year. Ninth graders averaged a 0.72 cumulative GPA in their petition year, tenth graders 1.04, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders 1.3, all representing a “D” average or below. High school seniors



(12<sup>th</sup> grade) who received truancy petitions averaged a cumulative GPA of 1.44 by end of their 12<sup>th</sup> grade year and had earned an average of 13.65 credits out of the 20 to 24 required for high school graduation<sup>27</sup> (Figures 11 and 12). As might be expected, students in the older grades had earned more credits than those in the younger grades, but as a whole, none of the grade-level cohorts were on-track to graduate in a timely manner.

### School Enrollment Following the 2010/11 Truancy Charge

By now it is clear that truancy petitions are associated with poor grades and course failure, and, among high school students at least, this translates to very high dropout rates. Ultimately, 60.6% of students who received truancy referrals in 2010/11 would disappear or drop out of

high school by the end of the 2013/14 academic year.

**Table 6. Cumulative Percentage of Students who had Dropped out or Disappeared from School by the Beginning of the Three Academic Years Following the 2010/11 School Year**

Dropped out or Disappeared by:	ALL	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
The beginning of AY 2011/12	11.0%	9.6%	8.4%	12.4%	24.5%
The beginning of AY 2012/13	28.5%	23.8%	26.2%	34.3%	38.2%
The beginning of AY 2013/14	47.0%	44.3%	48.4%	49.5%	42.3%
<b>End Result (AY 2013/14)</b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	<b>62.8%</b>	<b>55.2%</b>	<b>44.8%</b>
<b>Total number of petitioned students</b>	<b>7,634</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>2,485</b>	<b>2,132</b>	<b>534</b>

Figure 13 and Table 6 present the cumulative percentage of the petitioned truant cohort who had either dropped out

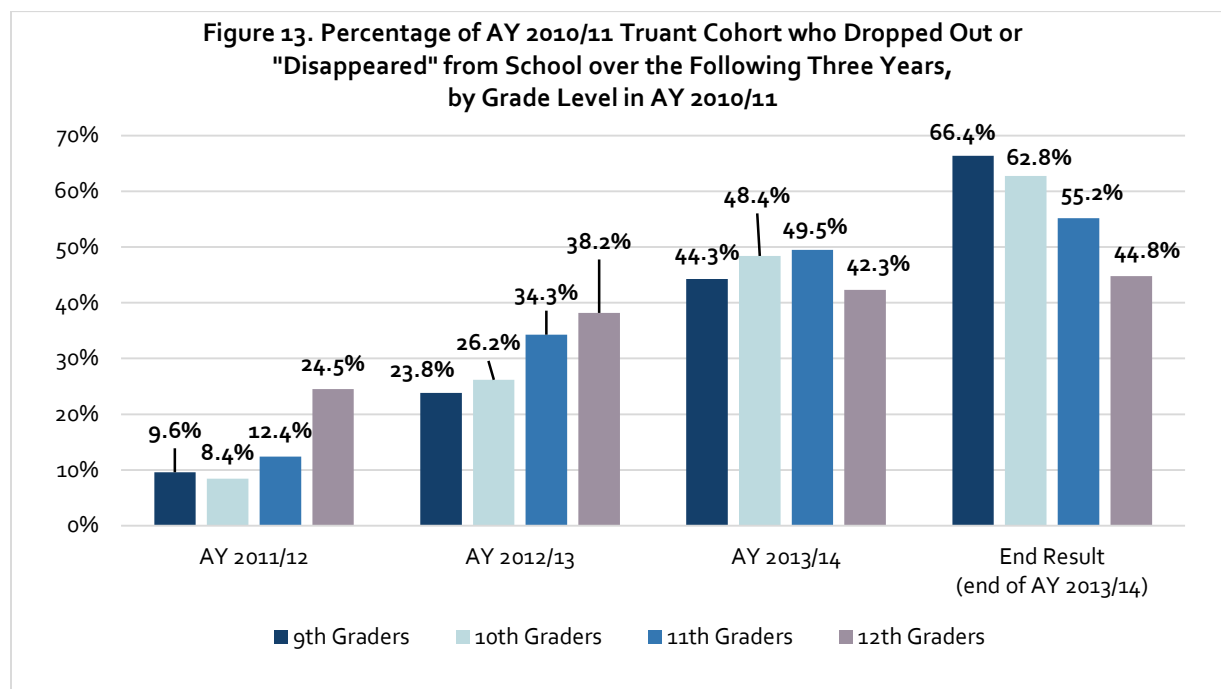
or simply disappeared<sup>28</sup> from school during the three years following their 2010/11 truancy charge<sup>29</sup>. By the start of the school year following the truancy petition, 11% of the petitioned truants had left school and would not receive a high school diploma GED, or any other

<sup>27</sup> Washington requires public high school students to complete a **minimum of 20 credits** to graduate. Many local school districts, however, require students to earn credits beyond the state minimum. <http://www.k12.wa.us/GraduationRequirements/Requirement-Credits.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> Did not have a formal exit code of “drop-out” but left the public school system and never returned. See Technical Notes for more details.

<sup>29</sup> This total does NOT include students who were no longer enrolled but who had earned diploma or GEDs by the end the study period. It also does NOT include students who later re-enrolled in high school before the end of the study period.

academic credential during the follow-up period. By the beginning of the third year following the 2010/11 truancy petition, 47% of the cohort had dropped out or disappeared from school, including 44% of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 48% of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders.



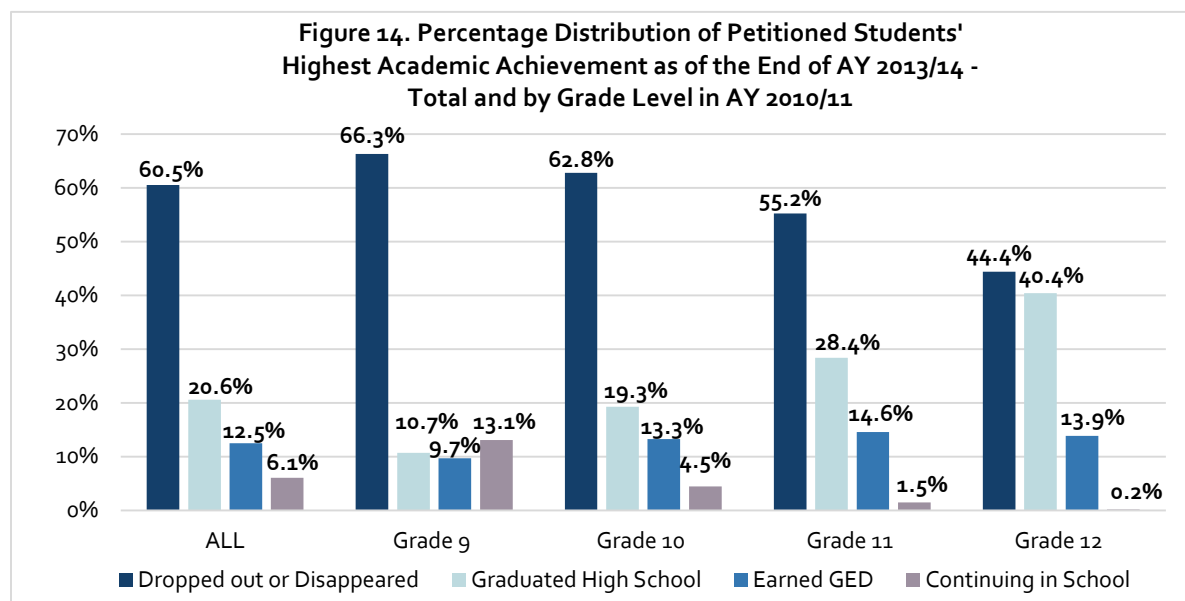
The dropout rates reported here for petitioned truants should not be directly compared to statewide averages reported by OSPI. First, the dropout/disappeared figures reported here do NOT include students who completed GEDs by the end of the study period. In contrast, OSPI categorizes students who receive GEDs in lieu of a regular high school diploma as dropouts. At the same time, it is likely that OSPI would not consider students in the “disappeared” category as dropouts at all. Students who officially transfer out of a school district are no longer figured into that district’s dropout rate. If they never re-enroll in a different school district then they truly “disappear” (i.e., they are not included in the official state graduation or dropout rates, which are based on school district-level data). What the 60.6% represents in the current study is the number of 2010/11 petitioned truants who did not earn a high school diploma, a GED, or any kind of certification from a postsecondary institution, minus an unknown (but likely small) percentage who moved out to another state or attended a private high school or college (refer to the Technical Notes for a more in-depth description of how the drop out/disappeared rate was calculated).

#### High School Graduation

Not all of the 2010/11 petitioned truants failed in school; 20.6% of the cohort had earned their high school diploma by the end of the study period, 12.5% had earned a GED certificate, and 6.1% were still enrolled in high school.



Just under 11% of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders graduated on time with their classmates (i.e., within 4-years), assuming they were first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2010/11<sup>30</sup> (see [Table 7](#) and [Figure 14](#)). However, not all students finish in four years, and now it is common for statewide reports to highlight 5-year rather than 4-year graduation rates. Thirteen percent (13%) of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders were still enrolled in school at the end of 2013/14, and therefore potentially on track for high school graduation within 5 years.



Nineteen percent (19%) of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders had graduated either on time or one year late by the end of 2013/14. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of 11<sup>th</sup> graders and 40% of the 12<sup>th</sup> graders had earned their high school diplomas by the end of 2013/14.

As explained previously, students who earn their GED certificate in lieu of a high school diploma are officially considered as dropouts by OSPI. However, in the present analysis, we created a separate category for students who completed their GED by the end the 2013/14 academic year, including 14.4% of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, combined, and 11.5% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

Alternative routes to academic and occupational success are an increasingly viable option for students who struggle in traditional academic settings, and two-year Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) play an important role in helping students to re-engage in academics and/or receive job training (Prince, 2005; Prince & Andreas, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> For more information, refer to the OSPI website, <http://www.k12.wa.us/Accountability/default.aspx>.

	Total		Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
	<b>7,634</b>	<b>100%</b>	2,483	<b>100%</b>	2,485	<b>100%</b>	2,132	<b>100%</b>	534	<b>100%</b>
<b>Outcome: end of 2013/14</b>										
Deceased	6	0.1	4	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.4
High School diploma	1,575	20.6	267	10.7	482	19.3	609	28.4	217	40.4
GED certificate	956	12.5	241	9.7	330	13.3	311	14.6	74	13.9
Vocational certificate, CTC	9	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.0	5	0.2	3	0.6
Continuing end of AY 2014	469	6.1	326	13.1	111	4.5	31	1.5	1	0.2
Dropped out	1,394	18.3	401	16.1	475	19.1	420	19.7	98	18.4
Disappeared	3,225	42.2	1,244	50.1	1,086	43.7	756	35.5	139	26.0
<i>Dropped out/ Disappeared</i>	<b>4,619</b>	<b>60.5</b>	1,645	66.3	1,561	62.8	1,176	55.2	237	44.4

The available data included any postsecondary degrees or certificates earned as of the end of AY 2013/14. No one in the cohort had earned a credential from a public four-year college or university, but a handful had earned two-year CTC degrees or certificates (see [Table 8](#)).

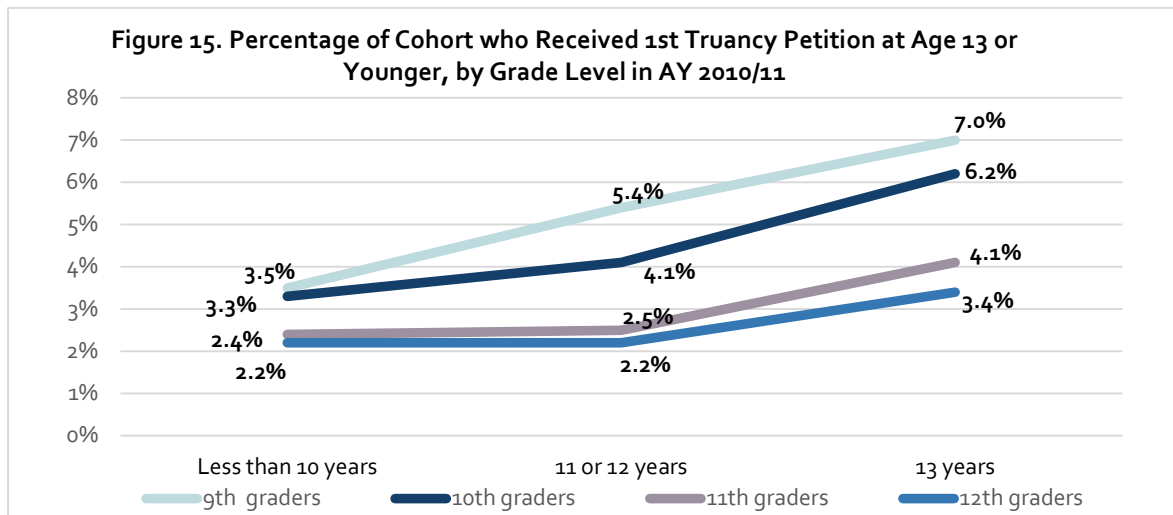
Degree or Certificate Type	TOTAL
• Earned Associates Degree from CTC	5
• Earned Medium or long vocational certificate from a CTC	2
• Earned Short vocational certificate (<45 credits) from CTC	21
• Completed non-credit occupational training at CTC	5

### Interaction of Truancy and Other Risk Factors: Implications for Educational Achievement

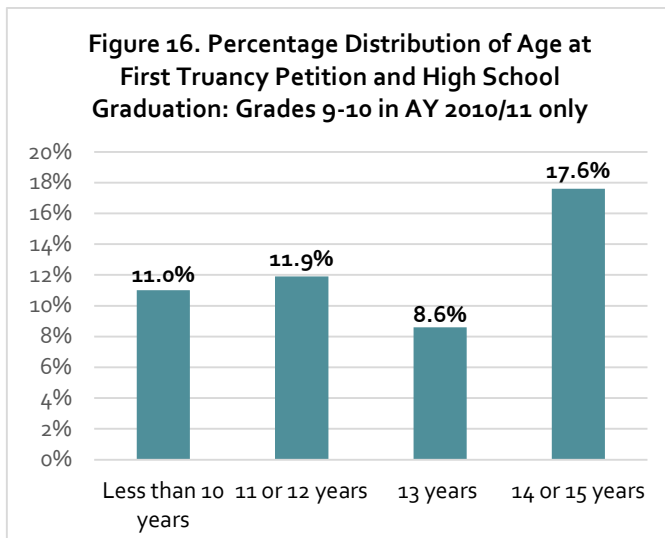
Few of the petitioned truants graduated from high school within the follow-up period and many, if not most, faced other challenges known to negatively impact school success. It was difficult, therefore, to isolate the relative contribution of each risk factor to the academic success or failure of the petitioned truant youth in the present study. Not surprisingly, court involvement on offender matters was associated with a significantly higher likelihood of dropping out of school. Youth who served time in detention for truancy were more likely to drop out than youth who had not been sentenced to detention. A higher number of overall truancy petitions was also associated with lower graduation rates. However, almost 60% of the truant population had juvenile offender records, and those with offender records were more likely to have more truancy petitions. In other words, school failure for truant youth begins to seem predictable when one takes into consideration all the other risk factors that typically simultaneously impact this population.

One contributing factor that does stand out is age at the time of the first truancy petition. The current data suggest that the younger a student is when s/he first receives a truancy petition, the less likely he or she is to graduate from high school.

First of all, students who receive truancy petitions at a younger age appear more likely to drop out before reaching the higher grades. Almost 16% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders had received their first truancy petitions at age 13 or younger, compared to only 7.8% of 12 graders (Figure 15). While one could argue that some petitioned truants are no longer getting petitions in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and so would not have shown up in our cohort in the first place, it is likely that very few early and chronic truants can remain in school through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



Among students who were in grades 9 or 10 in 2010/11, those who had previous petitions in elementary or middle school were less likely to graduate than those whose first petition occurred when they were older (or for whom the 2010/11 petition was the first) (Figure 16).



Conversely, petitioned truant students, on average, have very low high school graduation rates compared to the general student population. In the present case, petitioned truant students who had already made it to 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely to graduate than were the younger students. Chronic school disengagement often starts in middle school; when it does, the odds of dropout increase dramatically (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). Although much more work is needed, the present results suggest that the most chronically truant students rarely make it past grades nine or ten.

## Section II: Summary

Compared to their peers, students who receive truancy petitions have histories of poor performance in school and are very unlikely to graduate from high school. They are also more likely to have a history of special education involvement, juvenile court contact as an offender, and other risk factors for poor school outcomes.

The data suggest, furthermore, that students who receive truancy petitions at a younger age are at higher risk for early drop out and school failure than those who receive their first petitions later in high school. At first glance, this may seem counterintuitive; if early intervention is effective in reducing truancy and drop out, as the research suggests, then one would assume that children who receive truancy petitions at a younger age will be more likely to succeed in school. For a number of reasons, however, these findings point to the need for more intensive early intervention, not less. First of all, the present data did not include which petitioned truants participated in evidence-based interventions (such as CTBs), versus which did not. Secondly, we could not compare younger truant students who received truancy petitions with equivalent truant students who did not receive petitions. It could be that the truancy petition process does benefit younger students, but more research is needed to determine this. What we can conclude from the present results is that students who are petitioned at a younger age are likely to experience far more co-occurring risk factors than are students whose first (and maybe only) truancy petition is issued in their late high school years.

That said, there were limits to the conclusions allowed by the current data. The entire cohort consisted of petitioned truants, so there was no way to directly compare them to students with similar patterns of absences who did not receive truancy petitions. Consistent definitions and reliable reporting of unexcused absences was not required of districts until 2012/13, so this information was not available for the present analysis. Furthermore, as shown earlier, less than 50% of eligible students actually receive truancy petitions, so, without access to a matched control group of truant youth who were not petitioned, it is impossible to gauge whether a truancy petition will actually improve outcomes compared to no petition at all.

Recent improvements in data quality will provide answers to these and other questions. In the meantime, we can safely conclude that petitioned truant students are failing in school at far higher rates than the general population, and that improving school engagement and reducing truancy should be priorities for educators, juvenile courts and the larger community.

## SECTION III: Responses to Truancy in Washington State Juvenile Courts

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The poor educational performance among students petitioned truant in Washington motivates an examination of truancy interventions and a search for programs and practices associated with better results for the students. This section describes the availability and types of truancy intervention programs from the results of a 2014 survey of juvenile courts in Washington State. No schools or school districts were surveyed, so the analysis and discussion will include only programs that are either court-based or in which the courts play an active role. It will not include any truancy prevention programs that schools or districts may have that are independent of the juvenile courts. In addition to the survey results, this section utilizes publically available data on school district enrollment, truancy petition filing rates, etc., to compare districts with and without court-school truancy programs.

### The 2014 Juvenile Court Truancy Survey

#### Methodology

An online survey of court-based truancy practices and programs was distributed to all 33 juvenile courts in Washington State during October and November of 2014. The survey was developed by WSSCR based upon a thorough review of similar studies and in-depth discussions with court and truancy experts in Washington State. The content was strongly influenced by a 2004 national survey sponsored by the National Truancy Prevention Association and a 2004 survey of truancy practices in Washington State Juvenile Court jurisdictions (National Center for School Engagement, 2004; WSSCR, 2004). Initial drafts were circulated to three experienced Washington State juvenile court administrators for final comments and revisions.

The final survey included both forced-response and open-ended questions. The first part of the questionnaire addressed standard court practices around truancy, the use of screeners, court resources dedicated to truancy, and cooperation with school districts. Approximately 15 of the questions addressed issues such as the use of sanctions or incentives for truant students, the availability of community resources, satisfaction with the available programs, and additional comments or observations. Finally, the survey included up to 22 questions specific to up to three different truancy intervention programs, if applicable. A copy of the 2014 court truancy survey is available in [Appendix A](#).

#### Respondents

Twenty-nine of the 33 jurisdictions completed and returned the survey for an overall response rate of 88%. Ten of the surveys were completed by the juvenile court administrators. A juvenile probation officer or counselor completed the surveys in 7 cases, while an additional 5 were completed by a staff member directly involved in the Becca program, as indicated by the

job title. The remainder of the surveys received were completed by “Directors”, managers of specific programs or interventions for juveniles, or a deputy clerk/department head secretary.

## Analysis

The survey results were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS and qualitatively using sorting and organization by theme. The following presentation of the results is organized by question/topic and, unless otherwise specified, reflects only the responses and opinions provided by the court respondents. Data files and reports from OSPI were the source of reported statistics for the county and school district-level data used to provide context and support for the following discussion of the survey results.

## Results

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### Q: What is the standard court process in response to a typical first-time truancy petition in your county?

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In the vast majority of cases, truancy petitions are initiated and filed by the schools or school districts. Apart from exceptions associated with certain truancy interventions, a valid truancy petition is followed by a compulsory court hearing. If the judge upholds the truancy petition, then he or she will most likely impose certain conditions or sanctions on the petitioned truant. The courts are obligated to follow legal requirements including notifying the parents and providing language interpretation if necessary. If the student fails to fulfill the conditions set at the initial hearing, he or she may be found in contempt and receive additional sanctions or even detention days. The following description is from a small court with no truancy program:

*The school sends information [the truancy petition] to the prosecutor’s office. They [the prosecutor’s office] screen, and send out a notice to the parents and child. A court hearing is held. If [the judge upholds the petition] then [the youth is placed under the court’s] jurisdiction. The school reports to the prosecutor if there are any violations to the order for compulsory school attendance. [If there are violations, a] notice is sent for a contempt hearing.*

Courts with structured truancy intervention programs, such as CTBs, (to be discussed in detail below) will typically file a “stay petition”, or a “stay of proceedings” in which the student and family have the option of avoiding a court appearance in exchange for engaging in a formal truancy intervention or other remedial action. The primary purpose of these programmatic interventions is to support the student’s attendance and to help them to avoid further court involvement. The following quote from a large jurisdiction with an active truancy intervention process provides an example of how this works:

1. When youth reaches 5-7 unexcused absences in a month or 10 in a school year, the school files a truancy petition in court, but asks the case to be stayed.
2. Youth in [school districts with CTBs] are then referred to a Community Truancy Board that is organized and run by the school district.
3. The youth and his/her parents attend the Community Truancy Board.
4. If youth continues to have unexcused absences, the school requests the stay be lifted and the youth attend court.
5. The youth attends court, and if found to be truant is ordered to attend school.
6. If youth continues to miss school, school district files a contempt of court order.
7. If youth found to be in contempt, then sanctions are ordered with purge conditions. Sanctions vary and can be creative, but may include essay writing, a weekend program, community service work, electronic monitoring, and detention (although [the latter] is very rarely used).
8. If the youth continues to miss school, #6 and #7 can be repeated.

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**Q: Is there a court employee(s) dedicated to truancy cases? What is their role in the truancy process?**

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Virtually all of the responding juvenile courts reported having employee(s) dedicated to truancy cases, regardless of whether they had a formal truancy program. These employees are the primary liaisons between the courts and the schools. Other common duties include administration of truancy cases, educating schools on truancy matters, progress monitoring and service coordination between courts and schools.

All of the respondents had at least one employee responsible for ensuring that schools or school districts file the appropriate paperwork and follow the correct sequence of procedures for all truancy petitions. In addition, dedicated truancy staff typically provide information to school personnel about the truancy process, any changes in policy, or other related issues. At the very least, these employees must be available to school personnel via phone or email to answer any truancy-related questions, and, if necessary, to update schools and districts about any changes in laws or procedures related to truancy.

Progress monitoring was another commonly-mentioned court responsibility. A truancy petition is generally followed by a court order requiring regular attendance. Therefore, schools must provide the courts with the attendance and other academic records necessary to track compliance. In some cases the schools allow the court employees direct access to a petitioned student's attendance records, while others provide the court with regular progress updates.

Finally, service coordination and/or case management were common responsibilities for court truancy employees. A respondent from a small rural district, with no formal truancy program, said that the truancy employee's responsibilities were to "monitor attendance, arrange tutoring

*services, monitor curfew and grades, and secure services that may be requested by the family to assist with a successful education for the student.”*

The described role of the dedicated truancy employees differed according to the overall philosophy and practices of the court. Courts with truancy programs, such as CTBs, were no more likely than courts without formal truancy programs to have employees dedicated to truancy cases. However, compared to courts without truancy interventions, employees working in courts with active CTBs used more detail to describe their roles in the truancy process, which often included structured interactions with schools and other parties involved, including the provision of direct interventions. For example, a respondent from a jurisdiction with an active CTB described the responsibilities of the court truancy employees as follows:

*Each are assigned to a number of schools in a specific geographic location. They screen all petitions, conduct Community Truancy Boards, sit with the schools at court to present information, assist schools to correctly file petitions and contempts, work with schools to provide school-based interventions, oversee and provide court based interventions, provide progress reports to the Court.*

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**Q: Does your court use any sort of screener or risk assessment with truant youth?**

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Only three courts reported the regular use of validated screeners for petitioned youth in order to identify risk factors and needs and to target services accordingly. All three of these courts had CTBs, and all three used the WARNS (WARNS; George, et al., 2015) as their screening tool.

Other responses suggested different interpretations of the question. Three courts reported that potential truants are sometimes screened by a court official to determine if a truancy petition is warranted, given the information provided by the school. Another reported that truants were screened “just on occasion, when ordered by the court, but not as a regular occurrence,” without specifying the type of screener(s) used or when it might be required. Twenty courts reported that they used no screener at all with petitioned truant youth.

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**Q: Does your court use purge conditions for truants?**

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Twenty-eight (28) of the 29 responding juvenile courts require petitioned truant youth to complete a task or series of tasks in order to either avoid the truancy petition altogether, have the stay lifted, and/or avoid a contempt charge. These conditions may be imposed by the judge or included as part of a formal truancy intervention program. [Table 9](#) presents the types of pre-contempt-imposed directives mentioned by the survey respondents (some sites mentioned more than one). By far, the most common is an essay or workbook assignment, reported by 24/29 respondents. Other conditions included completing past school work, community service, behavioral health treatment, or simply “attend school”.



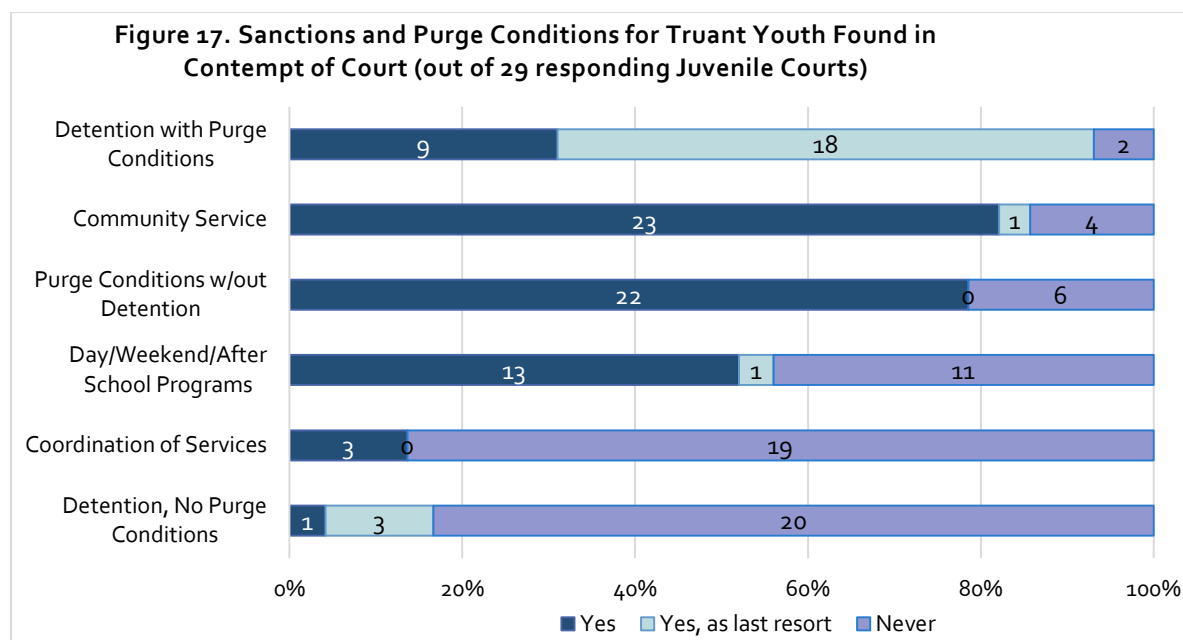
	TOTAL	29	100%
• Complete an essay or workbook	24	83%	
• Attend school/Improve attendance	6	21%	
• Complete past-due school work or course credit	7	24%	
• Perform community service	6	21%	
• Complete interview with school personnel	1	3%	
• Behavioral health assessment and/or treatment	5	17%	

Any of the directives listed in [Table 9](#) might also be used after a truancy contempt motion is filed. However, school attendance, essays and the like

were virtually always the first option for petitioned truants. If the imposed task is successfully completed, the petition is then dismissed or resolved.

**Q: What sanctions are used in your county, even occasionally, for truants who are found in contempt?**

The term “purge conditions” and “sanctions” are sometimes used interchangeably, but the current survey asked courts to differentiate between those typically used with petitioned truants prior to a contempt referral and those used after a contempt is filed (referred to here as “sanctions”). ([Figure 17](#)).



The use of detention for truant youth found in contempt is of particular interest to policy-makers. Therefore, the question on sanctions was of a forced-choice type, with a list of possible sanctions that do or do not involve detention to which the respondent replied: “Yes” [we use this], “Yes, but only after other sanctions have failed (as a last resort)”, “sometimes”, or “never”. Detention is used as a sanction for truant youth by the majority (27 out of 29) of

responding juvenile courts, usually as a last resort (see Figure 17). All but 4 courts reported using detention for truancy in conjunction with associated purge conditions, usually in the form of essays or related assignments. Detention durations for truancy contempt charges cannot exceed 7 days by Washington State law, and release is generally contingent on completing a purge condition such as an essay, giving the youth some degree of control over the timing of his or her release.

Besides detention, 24 courts use community service as a sanction, and 14 have alternative school programs such as weekend or afterschool classes. Finally, 22 juvenile courts reported that purge conditions such as those reported in Table 9 (above), without detention, may also be used as sanctions for youth found in contempt.

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**Q: Are you satisfied with the current sanctions used by your court for truant youth found in contempt?**

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More than one-half (15 of 29) of respondents reported being unhappy with the current sanctions used for truant youth. A frequently-offered critique was the lack of fit between commonly-used directives or purge conditions and the underlying causes of truancy. In the words of one Juvenile Court Administrator:

*The goal of any purge is to spark an interest and link them back to the schools. We are encouraging purge conditions at the schools, whether it be through attendance, reports about school-related history or after school/extracurricular activities.*

For example, an imposed condition may involve an essay topic deliberately selected to address positive traits, career goals, or the student's own ideas and plans to improve her/his school attendance. The hope is that the assigned activity will translate into behavioral changes leading to improved attendance. Unfortunately, as most survey informants readily acknowledged, the factors underlying chronic truancy are typically multiple, complex and unlikely to be so easily solved.

Concerns about sanctions and purge conditions involved not just the type, but the timing of the imposed conditions. As one respondent put it:

*The program takes too long in that that youth must CONTINUE to be truant following a truancy petition filing and the intervention program and THEN have a Fact-Finding Hearing, and then must CONTINUE to be truant before any sanctions can occur. And by the time this occurs, the youth has been truant so long they are failing their classes, and see no point in attending because they will often not earn credits necessary for graduation.*

The point being made here is that when truancy sanctions are reliant mainly upon a slow sequence of court proceedings they will do little to remedy the immediate problem of school

attendance. This particular respondent's jurisdiction had CTBs. However, the sanctions come into play only if the CTB fails to have an effect on attendance, leaving the most serious truancy cases at the mercy of a court process often working at cross-purposes with school schedules and attendance requirements.

Several respondents defended the use of detention as a sanction in truancy cases. According to one:

*SOME youth see the whole [truancy intervention] process as empty threats, until they are actually sitting in detention on a contempt charge. This is especially true for youth who have previously participated in the truancy process.*

In other words, those who advocated for the use of detention in truancy cases did so in the belief that it will be successful where other interventions have failed. As the quote above suggests, the use of detention may be predicated on the assumption that certain students will only attend school if faced with a period of confinement in detention.

One court respondent complained about use of purge conditions as a requirement for release from detention for truants, stating that many kids would rather sit in detention for the maximum 7 days than complete a long essay. Like many others, this particular court respondent expressed interest in developing more effective purge assignments, especially for students whose educational background has not prepared them for the task of writing a lengthy essay or book report.

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**Q: Do [you] work with local school districts, and if so, in what capacity?**

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The truancy petition process requires cooperation between the juvenile courts and the schools and school districts within their jurisdiction. School districts in Washington State operate fairly independently. Therefore, to adequately address truancy throughout their county or court jurisdiction, juvenile courts must work to establish multiple, independent cooperative relationships with each district in their jurisdiction (Table 10). These districts may vary widely in size, population demographics, and administrative cultures, thereby multiplying the challenges faced by juvenile courts in attempting to establish uniform and efficacious truancy programs.

The survey respondents were asked to describe the nature of their collaboration with the school districts in their counties or jurisdictions. The majority of respondents reported working with all school districts in their jurisdiction on some level, or even with all of the schools, especially in the smaller districts. For example, a truancy employee from a small jurisdiction reported devoting one day per week to each school district in the county, and spending time in every school building in each district.

**Table 10. Estimated Number of School Districts Associated with Each Juvenile Court Jurisdiction in the 2013/14 Academic Year<sup>31</sup>**

County/Court Jurisdiction	# School Districts	County/Court Jurisdiction	# School Districts
Adams County	5	Lewis County	13
Asotin and Garfield Counties	3	Lincoln County	8
Benton and Franklin Counties	10	Mason County	7
Chelan County	7	Okanogan County	8
Clallam County	5	Pacific and Wahkiakum Counties	7
Clark County	9	Pierce County	15
Cowlitz County	6	San Juan County	4
Douglas County	6	Skagit County	7
Ferry, Pend Oreille, Stevens Counties	20	Skamania County	4
Grant County	10	Snohomish County	14
Grays Harbor County	14	Spokane County	14
Island County	3	Thurston County	8
Jefferson County	5	Walla Walla, Columbia Counties	9
King County	19	Whatcom County	7
Kitsap County	5	Whitman County	13
Kittitas County	6	Yakima County	15
Klickitat County	10	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>

Not all courts are able to sustain such extensive relationships with school districts. However, all responding courts provide open lines of communication about truancy petitions to all the schools under their jurisdiction. The only exception, reported by several, is those schools or districts that have “never filed” truancy petitions, something that is more common, apparently, in smaller, outlying school districts.

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### Q: Do the schools and courts share data about petitioned truants?

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All but three of the responding courts claimed to regularly share and receive data with schools about petitioned truants, regardless of whether they had a formal partnership via a CTB or similar program. The type of data shared typically includes, at minimum, information such as attendance records to allow the courts to track compliance with court orders. The majority of reported data sharing is from the schools to the courts. However, a respondent from one court said that it provides “criminal adjudications” to the school districts, although it was not clear if this was for all students or only those who had received truancy petitions, nor was it clear whether this was individual-level or aggregate information.

Most responding courts reported sharing aggregate truancy data with the schools and districts, either as requested or on a regular basis, such as at annual district meetings. Courts typically gather and share back statistics on the number of petitions filed, stays issued, contempts

<sup>31</sup> School district boundaries in Washington State do not always conform to county boundaries and may, furthermore, change from year to year. Therefore the numbers in this table represent the best estimate in 2013/14

issued, and outcomes. Two of the larger courts reported being actively involved in gathering detailed data on truancy cases, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, and other relevant variables, all of which they share with the school districts.

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Q: Do you have a system or process in place to educate school districts about the court truancy process?

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All but five (5) responding courts reported having a process in place to educate schools and school districts about truancy. The degree of education described varied considerably, however. For several courts, the education process is limited to providing districts or schools with written notice of any changes in policies or practices and/or responding by email or phone to direct requests for information. More often, however, courts report holding regular training sessions for schools and districts on truancy procedures. Thirteen (13) of the 24 courts that provide education on truancy do so in the form of formal seminars or meetings at the beginning of each school year. Alternately referred to as “Truancy 101,” “kick-off meetings,” or “county truancy conferences,” the purpose of these annual meetings is to teach district and school personnel how to file and follow through on truancy petitions, to provide overviews of relevant laws and policies (particularly any recent changes), go over paperwork procedures, make suggestions on how to present information in court, and so on. In addition to or in place of an annual meeting, most courts hold trainings or visits throughout the school year on a regular or as-needed basis.

Where there were strong partnerships between schools and courts to address truancy, there were also strong incentives to ensure that schools were well-informed about the truancy process and well-supported by the courts. The following example comes from a jurisdiction with several truancy programs, including Community Truancy Boards:

*This year, we went out to each individual district and provided a 1.5 hour truancy training to educate them on the truancy process. The session included changes to the process itself, our goals going into the 2014/2015 school year: collaboration (between schools and the court), CTB's in every district, incentives for youth improving upon their attendance, consistency with forms throughout districts, the laws and we went over both petitions in detail - outlining the reason for filing each one. The goal being to make things as easy as possible for everyone. We found that the schools were incredibly grateful, the need was high (as there were disconnects in the process) and it provided the buy-in we needed to motivate the schools to consider CTB's. We have offered re-fresh trainings in small groups and we have even traveled out to schools with flashdrives with forms on them to take care of forms-related issues.*

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**Q: Does your court provide, or is your court involved with any programs or services to address truancy, including Community Truancy Boards (CTBs)?**

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Fifteen (15) of the 29 courts reported having at least one type of specialized program to address truancy in their jurisdiction, with some reporting two or even more. Eleven (11) courts have CTBs, seven run both CTBs and other types of truancy programs, and four have other (non-CTB) types of truancy programs only (see [Table 11](#), below).

	TOTAL	29	100%
<b>TOTAL number of courts with any truancy program</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>52%</b>
• Courts with any Community Truancy Boards (CTBs)		11	38%
• Courts with non-CTB Truancy Interventions		11	38%
• Courts with non-CTB truancy program Only		4	14%
• Courts with no Truancy Interventions		14	48.3%

Twenty two (22) different types of truancy programs were described by the 15 jurisdictions with programs. The program elements varied from brief

presentations or workshops to long-term structured interventions involving representatives from the courts, schools, and communities. Several courts had a series of programs with later interventions reserved for students who require more intensive supports. Most truancy programs included some degree of family/school/court collaboration, as well as an individualized plan to address barriers to school attendance for a particular student.

		CTBs		Non-CTBs		TOTAL	
	TOTAL	11	100%	11	100%	22	100%
<b>Lead Agency</b>	Court	4	36.4%	9	81.8%	13	59.1
	Schools/ Districts	6	54.5%	2	18.2%	8	36.4%
	Both	1	9.1%	0	0.0%	1	4.5%
<b>Funding Source</b>	Becca funds	5	45.5%	5	45.5%	10	45.5%
	County	0	0.0%	3	27.3%	3	13.6%
	Schools/district	1	9.1%	0	0.0%	1	4.5%
	Other/Combo	5	45.5%	3	27.3%	8	36.4%
<b>Years of operation</b>	0-3 years	5	45.5%	4	36.4%	9	40.9%
	4-6 years	2	18.2%	2	18.2%	4	18.2%
	7-10 years	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	1	4.5%
	10+ years	4	36.4%	3	27.3%	7	31.8%
<b>Program Duration</b>	<3 months	5	45.5%	4	36.4%	9	40.9%
	3 to 12 months	4	36.4%	5	45.5%	9	40.9%
	1 to 2 years	1	9.1%	0	0.0%	1	4.5%

As [Table 12](#) shows, the court is considered to be the lead agency in 82% of the non-CTB programs, while schools districts take the lead in almost two-thirds of the CTB programs. Almost one-half of the programs are operated with dedicated Becca funds, while the rest are funded by county, state, or school district funds, grants, or some combination thereof.

About 40% of all the programs have been in operation for less than three years, while over 1/3 have been in place for over 10 years. Finally, program duration is fairly evenly split between short-term programs lasting less than three months or three- to 12-month programs.

## Incentives

Respondents were asked to identify any incentives or sanctions associated with participation in the truancy intervention program. Eleven (11) of the 15 courts with a truancy program reported no specific incentives other than such things as “avoiding court,” “clarifying the importance of attending school and meeting court orders,” “improved school outcomes,” etc. The three (3) respondents who reported positive incentives for completion of the truancy program cited “*transportation, housing, counseling and work modification,*” “*bracelets and certificates of completion,*” and “*small school or community-based incentives such as the fee for involvement in an activity, movie tickets, ASB card, or art supplies.*” In virtually every case, students who do not successfully complete the program and improve their attendance are referred back to the juvenile court system.

## Program Evaluation

The use of data to track process and outcomes correlates with improved program effectiveness and is a key component of contemporary public management. Ten (10) of the 15 counties with truancy programs reported tracking outcomes, including 8 of the 11 counties with CTBs (Table 13). Virtually all programs that track outcomes include school attendance and/or the successful resolution of the truancy petition versus a referral for a contempt hearing. One court reported tracking referrals to mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, as well as educational status at the end of the year. As mentioned earlier, attendance and other school data used for outcomes must be provided by the partnering school districts, requiring strong district/court cooperation. Very few (3 of the 15) of the existing truancy intervention programs had been subject to an outside evaluation of program implementation or effectiveness as of December 1, 2014 (when the survey closed).

		CTBs		Non-CTBs		TOTAL	
	TOTAL	11	100%	11	100%	22	100%
<b>Tracks Program Outcomes</b>	Yes	6	54.5%	7	63.6%	13	59.1%
	No	5	45.5%	4	36.4%	9	40.9%
<b>Has the program been evaluated?</b>	Yes	3	27.3%	4	36.4%	7	31.8%
	No	8	72.7%	7	63.6%	15	68.2%

## Program Eligibility

In most cases, students are referred to truancy programs after the school files a truancy petition with the court, or “post-filing” as opposed to “pre-filing.” Four (4) courts reported that students are referred to the program prior to a petition being filed. According to the program descriptions, this usually means that the conversation between the courts and schools begins

prior to the petition being filed. Only one court respondent explicitly stated that, upon agreement between all the parties involved, a student could be referred to the program prior to and in place of a truancy petition being filed. In any case, truancy interventions ideally seek to keep the youth out of court altogether, but a truancy petition is usually required to initiate the proceedings.

*A petition is filed by the School District. A letter is sent to the youth and parent/guardian by the Juvenile Department inviting them to a truancy intervention meeting. School officials, the juvenile, parent/guardian and juvenile probation counselor attend the intervention meeting. If the intervention agreement is signed, a Stay of Proceeding is filed. The youth does not go to court unless the intervention agreement is violated.*

### Community Truancy Boards (CTBs): Core Components

Eleven (11) of the 29 responding jurisdictions reported operating CTBs. According to the descriptions provided by the respondents, CTBs in Washington State involve one or more of the following components:

- A court-school-family collaborative model.
- An emphasis on individually-tailored interventions.
- Involvement of volunteers from the community and/or representatives of local non-profit or governmental social service agencies.
- Stable teams consisting of school, court and community members who adhere to standardized protocol and deal with many truant youth from a given school district.
- Regular, structured meetings with the youth, family, and all of the team members. Often these are standing meetings in which the team addresses more than one truancy case at a time.

The decision to refer to a CTB is virtually always that of the school or court/school team rather than the court alone. The survey did not specifically ask for selection criteria, but several courts mentioned that the school or district uses a screener to make this decision. One smaller jurisdiction with a CTB serving about 20% of petitioned youth indicated that the court worked in conjunction with the referring school to screen petitioned truants, and tended to refer younger and lower-risk students to the CTB. Since this was the only truancy program mentioned by this particular respondent, presumably the 80% that did not screen into the CTB would go through the typical court process with no access to a truancy intervention program.

The CTB model requires committed, stable teams of court, school, and community-based representatives that focus on school or district-wide truancy prevention, as well as provide individual interventions. In contrast, non-CTB interventions are more likely to involve temporary teams consisting of individuals gathered to deal with a particular truancy case. The



following survey excerpts (all from different courts) emphasize the structured, consistent, and team-oriented approach of CTBs:

*CTB meetings happen at the school on half days after school bell hours. [The CTB team consists of] [u]sually one community member and several community resource reps (mental health, substance abuse, family, youth, school & truancy reps, etc.). CTBs can be held twice a month.*

*We hold a weekly Community Truancy Board meeting involving the youth, family, Dean of Students, School Admin, various school district personnel (counselors, teachers, etc.) and the court. One staff from [the ESD] has been hired to provide some case management assistance and record-keeping for this board. [The team meeting operates on the] 45 minute model.*

*Six students are scheduled each week. The CTB lasts 3 hours and is held at the school district office. The CTB consists of parents, student, school administrator, Becca case manager, representatives from six CBOs (community-based organizations) and occasionally a school teacher or counselor and an interpreter when needed. The school administrator presides over the meeting. CTB members contribute to a discussion that results in a plan for student's re-engagement in school.*

*Each district is different, but typically CTBs [meet] a couple times a month. Meeting locations vary, but most are held in school settings.*

*CTBs are solution focused and try to identify needs of student to improve school attendance. The meetings are typically chaired by a school administrator, but all CTB members, parents and students have input.*

The CTB model requires a long-term commitment from the school district to actively participate in the process, including but not limited to additional staff time on the part of the district. As mentioned, a given county or multi-county court jurisdiction will include anywhere from one or two to 20 different school districts, with an average of 5 or 6, and court/school district partnerships need to be established with each individual district. For this reason, school/court collaborative efforts, including CTBs, can include only those districts willing and able to participate.

### Variations on Court Truancy Interventions

Eleven of the 15 courts with truancy programs operate CTBs. Of these, 7 also have other truancy programs that either complement or co-exist with the CTBs (for an example, see the box, below). Four (4) jurisdictions reported non-CTB interventions only.

***Special Case: Clark County's Multi-Tiered Truancy Reduction Program***

All nine school districts in Clark County partner with the Clark County Juvenile Court in a 3-stage truancy reduction program designed to provide a progressive hierarchy of education and support services attuned to the needs of the individual students. Petitioned truants begin with the first level and progress to the next levels only if attendance fails to improve.

**Level 1:** *"The Truancy Workshop"* had been in operation for four years, as of November, 2014. About 65% of all students who receive truancy petitions are referred to the Truancy Workshop. The program consists of an educational/information PowerPoint presentation for the youth and their parent(s), as well as a meeting between the student, family, and school district representatives during which a re-engagement plan is developed and agreed upon by the youth and parent. They are informed that if attendance improves from this point forward, the truancy petition will be dismissed. Tracked outcomes include subsequent school attendance and the need for referral to the second program, the *"ESD 112 Clark County Truancy Project"* (CCTP).

**Level 2:** About 35% of petitioned youth either require more intensive intervention from the outset or fail to show improved attendance after completion of the Truancy Workshop. These students are referred to CCTP, which was developed in 1997 in partnership with local school districts and the ESD. The CCTP includes intensive mental health screening, individual meetings with the family, school personnel, and community partners, referrals to needed services, and case management. School and court data are combined to track the following outcomes: improved attendance, juvenile court contact, and high school graduation. The duration of the program can be up to 12 months, as needed by the student. If attendance does not improve with this intervention, the student will be referred back to the court for intervention.

**Level 3:** About 10% of petitioned truants who fail to improve attendance after completion of the Truancy Project are found in contempt and so are referred to the *Clark County Community Truancy Board (CTB)*. Like the Truancy Project, the CTB had been in operation for 17 years, as of November, 2014. The duration of the program is about 2 months. Like the other two programs, all 9 school districts have the option of participating. The CTB meets monthly in each geographical area of the county. Barriers to attendance are discussed with the trained community volunteers and plans are put into place for the youth and parent, separately. While there is no funding available for tangible rewards, youth are invited back to celebrate accomplishments. At this point, if students do not improve their attendance they will face additional repercussions, including but not limited to being found in contempt of court.

Compared to CTBs, non-CTB truancy programs tend to be more court-directed from the beginning. For example, in one jurisdiction, petitioned truants are screened for eligibility for a non-CTB truancy program by the court services officer (CSO). In at least two other jurisdictions, truants are referred to the (non-CTB) truancy program by the court, either after the petition is filed or if the student is referred for a contempt hearing.

The non-CTB truancy interventions described here generally include multiple, often ad-hoc meetings between school staff, the youth, parents and court with an aim toward overcoming barriers to school attendance. The actual services provided and the individuals involved are often decided on a case-by-case basis. For example, the following program is court-ordered on an as-needed basis, and the survey respondent described the basic program elements as follows:

*The juvenile court staff work with the school administration, parents and kids as requests arise or after the court makes a finding and directs [the student] to the program after petitions or contempt findings. A local (7 hrs per week) multi-function employee assist with pregnant or particularly at-risk youth.*

The following description emphasizes the diversity of practices that often characterize these interventions:

*Good god...meetings! In JCS offices, in school offices, with parents & youth, with youth alone, with school staff, with court staff, parents, youth and JCS....as often as needed...family involvement yes...principle activities [include] solving the issues contributing to the truancy....yes everybody provides input to the process.*

One fairly typical non-CTB truancy program begins with a referral following an eligibility screening conducted by the court. The referral is followed by a meeting between school officials, the court intervention specialist, the student, and his/her parents. Both students and parents sign an agreement to enter the program in lieu of coming to court. Once the agreement is reached, a court-based intervention specialist works with the family to identify barriers to school attendance and to develop an individualized action plan. The specialist then monitors the student's attendance and intervenes, if deemed appropriate.

Several courts offer other types of truancy programs as an alternative or a complement to CTB programs. In these cases (one of which is described in-depth below), the intervention is usually far more specific and structured than those described above. The following are some examples of non-CTB programs operating in courts with active CTBs:

*[Truancy] Class is scheduled as needed (at least 5 students) in each of the five participating districts. Class is held at the high school in the district that the students attend. Parents are also invited. Information is presented by the two Becca case*

*managers. Information covers development of goals, barriers, support, brain development, benefits of education, cost of living, educational options...Students leave class with their own personal plan for completing their high school education.*

*Day Reporting School--Youth who have been suspended, expelled, dropouts are referred to our transitional day reporting school program. Youth are reengaged with their home school typically within 60 days. Weekend Program--Youth in contempt are referred to Saturday program. Parents are encouraged to attend for the first 3 hours of skill building and/or counseling. The last 3 hours are for the youth to complete community service projects. Programming staff keep the PCs [probation counselors] informed of youth attendance and behaviors.*

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**Q: Do you have similar versions of your [CTBs or other truancy intervention program] with different school districts? If so, which ones and how many?**

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CTBs must be maintained more or less independently with each school district in a jurisdiction, as mentioned previously. Of the eleven (11) juvenile courts with CTB programs, one had a CTB program with less than 10% of the school districts in the region, while four had CTB programs with over 90% of their school districts.

The 11 courts with CTBs include in their geographical boundaries a total of 121, or 41% of the 295 school districts in the state. However, these eleven courts combined have CTBs with only 51 of the 121 school districts within their geographical boundaries ([Table 14](#)). These same eleven courts served an additional 26 of the 121 districts through non-CTB truancy programs. The four courts that reported only non-CTB truancy programs had programs with 12/19, or 63% of the districts in the districts in their region.

	Truancy Intervention Programs Available in the Court/Jurisdiction				No Survey Response
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>CTB</b>	<b>Non-CTB only</b>	<b>None</b>	
<b>Number of Court Jurisdictions</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total Number of School Districts</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>School/Court Truancy Program in District</b>					
• Community Truancy Board (CTB)	<b>51 (17%)</b>	51 (42%)	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
• Non-CTB program only	<b>38 (13%)</b>	26 (22%)	12 (63%)	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
• No Truancy Intervention Program	<b>206 (70%)</b>	44 (36%)	7 (37%)	<b>131</b>	<b>24</b>

In sum, 51 (17%) of the 295 school districts in Washington State in AY2013/14 had active CTB partnerships with their local juvenile courts. An additional 38 (13%) had access to some other sort of court-sponsored truancy intervention for petitioned youth. The remaining districts had

no court/school truancy interventions (62%) or were located in a non-responding jurisdiction (24 districts total).

### Students Access to School/Court Truancy Programs

District enrollment data were used to estimate the total number of students with access to CTBs or other truancy interventions, based on the participating districts reported in the survey responses. School districts with CTBs and other truancy programs are, on average, much larger than districts with no truancy programs. The 17% of school districts with court/school CTB programs enrolled 31.5% of all students in the state in AY 2013/14 (see Table 15).<sup>32</sup> An additional 31% of enrolled students had access to a non-CTB truancy program in their district, meaning that 62.4% of all enrolled students in Washington had access to some sort of court-based truancy program during the 2013/14 academic year.

	<b>Total number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
<b>TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION, Oct 1, 2013</b>	<b>1,056,115</b>	<b>100%</b>
Students enrolled in districts with active Community Truancy Boards (CTBs)	332,994	31.5%
Students enrolled in districts with non-CTB truancy programs only <sup>33</sup>	326,546	30.9%
<b>Total number of students with access to court/school truancy interventions</b>	<b>659,540</b>	<b>62.4%</b>

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### Q: What barriers have you encountered in trying to implement or sustain truancy intervention or prevention programs?

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The most commonly-mentioned barriers to implementing CTBs or other truancy programs were related to funding or resources at either the court level or on the part of the larger community. Another very common complaint was a lack of interest on the part of schools or school districts to participate in truancy programs. Finally, some respondents reported that a lack of interest or involvement on the part of the community is a major barrier for them (see [Table 16](#)). For example:

*Because we are such a small rural county we have difficulties in responding quickly with the proper hearings due to our courts being about 45 minutes away from our juvenile department offices and from the area where most of our population is located.*

*Truancy Boards were implemented [in the past] but ultimately disbanded over a period of time due to minimal, diminished and overall lack of public/volunteer participation.*

<sup>32</sup> The October 1, 2013 enrollment counts were used, OSPI, <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx>

<sup>33</sup> This only includes programs that included the courts. Schools and districts may have other truancy programs that the court respondents were not aware of.

*We have referred students for drug/alcohol evaluations. We have referred students for mental health evaluation. We have referred families for FRS [Family Reconciliation Service]. We have referred students to after school programs (if available). We've had students bring in weekly progress reports. Barriers that we encounter are RESOURCES. We lack mental health and d/a counselors in our county, and what we have available is a drive for families unless they live with [certain] city limits, so transportation is a huge issue for some.*

*We have lost some of the community resources mainly due to budget cuts. Those services end up being allocated strictly to youth on criminal supervision. We are working on trying to establish a Community Truancy Board.*

As the last quote suggests, funding issues (court, school, or social services) are directly linked to resource availability and were frequently listed as barriers, particularly by courts with no truancy programs. Staffing requires funding, and often court staff are not available to run truancy or other special programs, according to the respondents.

Respondents from two jurisdictions said that they had had CTBs in the past that had since been discontinued. An additional two courts with current CTBs have seen a decrease in the number and range of CTBs in their jurisdiction. In one case, the issue was related purely to funding, but in two cases respondents cited a lack of interest on the part of their community and school partners as the primary reason for closing the CTB. An additional five respondents mentioned other types of truancy programs that have since ended. In all five cases, the program closure was due at least in part to a lack of funds.

	TOTAL	Truancy Program		
		None	CTBs	Non-CTBs
<b>TOTAL</b>	29	14	11	4
No barriers noted	7	2	3	2
Lack of interest/participation from schools	15	4	7	4
Lack of court staff or funding	8	5	3	0
Lack of community resources (plus distance)	13	9	2	2
Lack of family involvement and interest)	2	0	2	0

Beyond the commonly-cited problem of funding, however, many survey respondents complained about a lack of interest or participation on the part of schools and districts, whether or not they had a truancy program. CTBs require an active partnership between the courts and the schools. According to the responses, not all schools or districts are equally willing to dedicate the staffing and other resources needed for a CTB or other truancy program. Some school districts actively oppose such partnerships, and in this case the courts can do little to convince them otherwise. Furthermore, participation on the part of schools and districts

was often attributed to one or two active individuals such as school principals, so an established program can be threatened if a key school contact leaves their official position. The issue becomes even more complicated when multiple districts are involved, since each district may have separate rules and procedures, access to different resources, etc.

In some cases, school districts are perceived as trying to avoid the truancy petition process altogether. One court respondent said that many school districts in their county had admitted to not filing nearly as many truancy petitions as were warranted by student absences. Another respondent stated that a local school district “hadn’t even touched the tip of the iceberg.” The same individual remarked that while they had evidence that districts were not filing petitions on all youth who met the requirements, none of the school districts had supplied the numbers that would clarify the size of the discrepancy.

At least one court in a large county is actively seeking ways to encourage the school districts in that county to cooperate in truancy boards. First, they require districts that are not interested in forming CTBs to represent themselves at court hearings (presumably a hardship for many districts). They also offer support, training and encouragement to all districts in the hope that this will prompt them to reconsider.

## Trends in Truancy Petitions – School Districts with and without Court-Based Truancy Programs

Truancy intervention programs in general, and CTBs in particular, can be expected to interact with truancy petition filing patterns in multiple ways. This section compares patterns of truancy petition filings in school districts with active CTBs or other court/school truancy partnerships to those without such partnerships. School districts in the four court jurisdictions that did not respond to the survey were included for purposes of comparison<sup>34</sup>. As noted previously, juvenile courts with CTBs do not necessarily serve every district in their jurisdiction. Therefore, school districts were grouped by whether they had a CTB in place, a non-CTB truancy intervention program, or no truancy program at all, regardless of their jurisdiction.

The percentage of enrolled students with 10 or more absences was slightly lower in districts with CTBs (3.1%) and non-CTB truancy programs (2.8%) compared to districts with no truancy programs (3.8%), but these differences were non-significant (See [Table 17](#)). On the other hand, school districts with CTBs were significantly more likely than those without CTBs to file truancy petitions on eligible students in AY 2012/13. School districts participating in CTBs filed truancy petitions on about 42% of all students with 10 or more unexcused absences, compared to 22% in districts with non-CTB truancy programs and 27% of those with no truancy programs at all. If

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<sup>34</sup> Information on the school districts in the non-responding jurisdictions is included for the purpose of completing the picture. While these districts are in some ways very different from the responding court jurisdictions, no interpretation can be made of these differences because of a lack of information about available truancy programs.

nothing else, therefore, school districts with CTBs in place are more likely than those without these programs to use the petition process to hold students accountable for their attendance.

	All	No Truancy Program	CTB	Other (non CTB)	No survey Response
Number of School Districts	295	182	51	38	24
Total enrollment	1,049,901	372,357	329,917	323,136	24,491
Average district enrollment	3,559	2,046	6,469	8,504	1,020
Total truancy petitions filed <sup>36</sup>	10,301	3,838	4,291	1,984	188
Truancy Petitions per 100 Enrolled	0.98	1.03	1.30	0.61	4.16
Total with 10+ UAs*	34,722	14,310	10,273	9,164	975
% students with 10+ UAs	3.3%	3.8%	3.1%	2.8%	4.0%
Truancy petitions as % of students with 10 + UAs	29.7%	26.8%	41.8%	21.6%	19.3%

\*"UA" = Unexcused Absences

However, the statistics presented in [Table 17](#) should be interpreted with some caution. For example, some school districts file multiple petitions on a single eligible student, thus driving up the proportion of truancy petitions per students eligible. Further, districts have only recently agreed upon the definition of an unexcused absence. For all of these reasons, the findings presented in this section are designed to provoke critical thought about the goals of CTB and other truancy programs, and to generate questions that can be answered in future research studies as appropriate data, uniformly collected, becomes available.

As mentioned in the previous section, some of the survey respondents reported that not all school districts file truancy petitions. Since school/court partnerships depend upon the schools to identify truant youth and file the requisite petitions if needed, it was hypothesized that all districts with CTBs would, by definition, file truancy petitions if necessary.

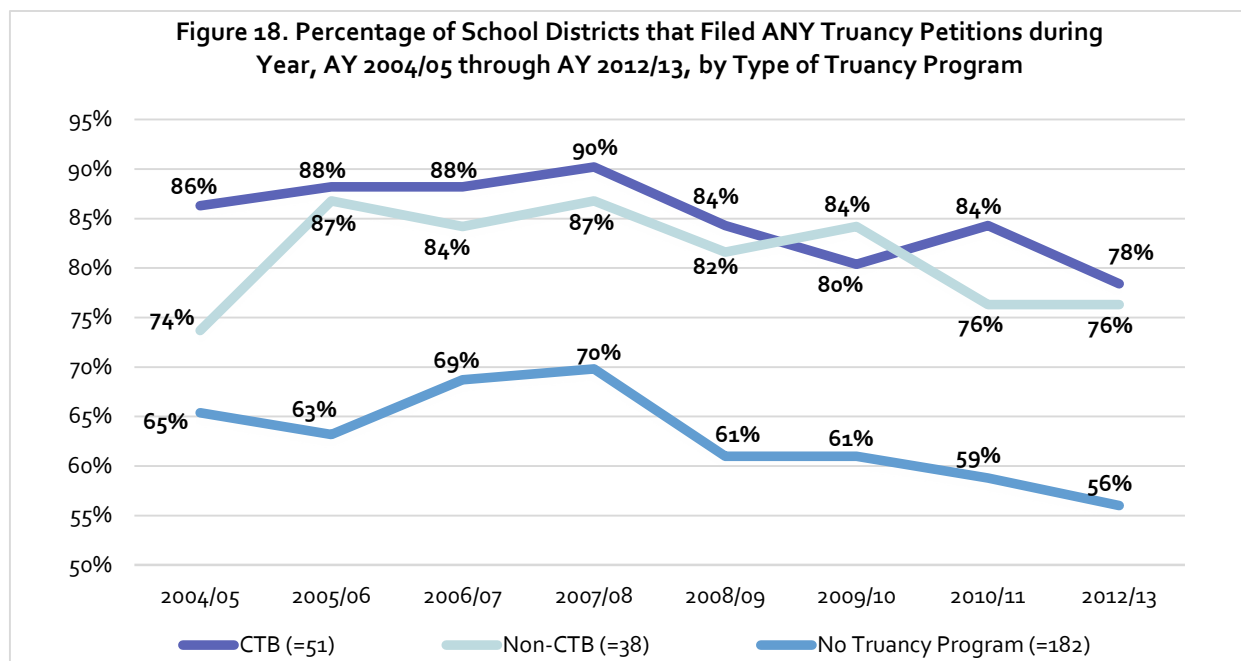
[Figure 18](#) tracks the percentage of school districts that filed ANY truancy petition during a given academic year, AY 2004/05 through AY 2012/13, by the type of truancy program available in 2013/14<sup>37</sup>. As this shows, school districts with CTBs are slightly more likely than those with non-CTB programs and far more likely than districts without truancy programs to file truancy petitions. Furthermore, this pattern has been relatively stable since the mid-2000s.

<sup>35</sup> The last year for which the OSPI Truancy Reports were available.

<sup>36</sup> It is assumed that the number of petitions filed as reported in the yearly Truancy Reports to the legislature put out by OSPI refer to the number of students who received truancy petitions, unduplicated. However, this was not explicitly stated in the report and so the actual percentages may be slightly off if some students received more than one petition in a given school year.

<sup>37</sup> Truancy petition filings per district were not available for the 2011/12 academic year.





On average, however, recent years have seen declining percentages of school districts filing truancy petitions, going from a high of 76% of districts in AY 2006/07 to a low of 64% in AY 2012/13, a pattern possibly related to the 2009 *Bellevue* ruling (referred to earlier). CTB districts were also less likely to file in recent years, declining from 84% in AY 2010/11 down to 78% in AY 2012/13.

### Summary: Section III

In the two decades since the passage of Washington State’s Becca Laws in 1995, the proportion of truancy cases has grown from a small fraction to approximately one-half of all juvenile court cases statewide. Juvenile courts in Washington State are encouraged to work with local school districts to provide specialized truancy prevention programs that adhere to current guidelines for effective truancy reduction, referred to in statute as “Community Truancy Boards” (CTBs) (see Cumbo & Burden, n.d.). Twenty-nine out of 33 juvenile courts in Washington State returned a 2014 survey aimed at identifying the availability and types of truancy reduction programs currently offered to truant youth and their families entering the court system. Only 15 of the 29 responding courts offered any formal truancy programs at all as of 2/10/14, and barely one-third, 11 total, operated CTBs.

Whether or not they have a truancy program, juvenile courts are obligated to provide direct support to school districts around the truancy petition process. Depending on the size of the jurisdiction, most of the courts had at least one full-time employee dedicated to providing the truancy-related services, including but not limited to:

1. Ongoing education and assistance to all school districts and/or schools in their jurisdiction about the truancy petition process and/or any changes to the laws or procedures.
2. Tracking the paperwork for each truancy petition and ensuring that the school has followed the proper procedures.
3. Tracking the academic progress of petitioned truant youth by obtaining school records.
4. Sharing information about petitioned truant youths back to the schools.

Besides the basic responsibilities listed above, there were several other commonalities between the courts in their responses to truancy. All of the courts imposed assignments or conditions on petitioned truants, almost always involving a homework or essay assignment in addition to the requirement to attend school. Most courts occasionally use detention with particularly recalcitrant truant youth. However, many respondents also expressed their dissatisfaction with these “one-size-fits-all” responses to truancy.

As mentioned, 11 courts operate community truancy boards with at least a few school districts in their jurisdiction, and four others operate other types of structured truancy prevention programs. These programs differ in terms of their funding sources, the roles of community and school partners, and other factors. Given that a goal of a truancy program like a CTB is to provide individualized interventions, it was a surprise that only three courts reported using a validated needs assessment meant to identify specific barriers to school attendance and allow for targeted service provision, a critical component of effective interventions (McKinney, 2013).

The respondents cited a number of challenges to providing the level of truancy prevention programming recommended by the Becca Laws. CTBs, as defined in statute and the truancy literature, are very time- and resource-intensive. They require the active participation of schools, families, the courts, and community members, at a minimum. They require that communities have the resources to provide the comprehensive services to address the array of issues that underlie truancy and that are the target of effective truancy interventions. CTBs and other truancy programs are based on cooperative partnerships between individual school districts and their local county court system. In larger school districts, a CTB might include only one school in partnership with the court. Considering that a given jurisdiction includes an average of 5-6 autonomous school districts, a juvenile court must establish multiple separate partnerships, multiple CTBs, in fact, to serve the needs of all of their petitioned youth. This raises the following problems:

1. **Funding.** Washington’s truancy laws currently recommend that all juvenile court jurisdictions operate CTBs, but the state provides no additional funding to either courts or schools to operate these time- and resource-intensive programs. The requirements of providing the basic truancy-related services (handling the petition, convening hearings, and the like) listed above was all that some court budgets could handle. Most of the truancy reduction programs mentioned by respondents, including CTBs, were supplemented by grants or other outside funding sources rather than relying on court funds alone.

2. **School district cooperation.** Not all school districts were willing to partner with the courts to provide CTBs.
3. **Geography and size.** To serve all districts in a county, court employees must often cover huge distances, especially in less populated rural districts.
4. **Community resources.** CTBs require active community partnerships and the availability of resources in the community that will meet the needs of the truant youth. These community characteristics vary greatly across the state.

In all, about 31.5% of public-school students in Washington State are enrolled in districts with active CTBs, and an additional 31% are in districts with access to other types of court-based truancy prevention programs. Given the limitations of the data, it was not possible to determine the relative impact of available truancy programs such as CTBs on outcomes for truant youth. On the other hand, school districts with strong relationships with the juvenile courts around truancy, and particularly those with CTBs, are more proactive in filing truancy petitions. As a result, it is likely that truant students in these schools have more access to appropriate interventions intended to improve their attendance. However, school districts with active CTBs likely differ from one another in multiple ways that could not be accounted for in the present analysis, such as their size, access to funding, student population demographics, truancy program history, etc., all of which may independently affect filing rates. For this reason, we cannot know from the present data if the establishment of a CTB makes districts more or less likely to file truancy petitions. Future studies are needed to address the impact of CTBs on local truancy practices, as well as on student performance and outcomes.

## SECTION IV: The Future of Truancy Reduction in Washington State: Recommendations for Effective Policies and Practices

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This report highlights serious challenges for truant students, their families, their schools, the courts, and policy makers. The Becca Laws aim to engage parents, schools, lawmakers and communities in a collective effort to prevent truancy and to keep youth engaged in school. The authors of the law understood that strong partnerships, shared goals, and active cooperation were key elements in effective truancy reduction programs. The law, therefore, contains specific language encouraging all courts and districts to adopt the CTB model, a program template with a sound theoretical and research base. The Becca Laws also require schools to track attendance and to intervene in all truancy cases, including filing a petition with the local juvenile court if a student reaches a certain number of unexcused absences in a month or a year.

Twenty years later, widespread inconsistencies and a lack of focused program development have limited the effectiveness of the truancy petition process. Now is the time to learn from these accumulated experiences in order to better realize the original intent of the Becca Laws with regard to truancy prevention and intervention. This report describes divergent practices and programs in the schools and courts, organizational and system-level differences in responses to truancy between court jurisdictions, and a variety of local challenges to truancy prevention programs.

When implemented with fidelity, however, the truancy petition process, accompanied by active CTB intervention programs, can be effective in reducing truancy and improving academic success (e.g., Strand & Lovrich, 2014). For example, Spokane, Clark, and Benton-Franklin juvenile courts have developed remarkably well-defined models for successful community truancy boards, and evaluations have shown positive outcomes for students<sup>38</sup>. The local successes of a few well-implemented, well-funded, and well-supported CTBs highlight the multiple challenges faced by other courts and school districts in creating and sustaining these programs. The present study found that only 11 out of 29 responding juvenile courts operated any CTBs in 2014. Those that did operate CTBs were rarely able to serve every district in the jurisdiction. Out of 295 school districts in Washington State, 51, or about 17% were engaged in CTBs with the local courts.

The current methodology did not allow us to link student outcomes to specific types of truancy programs. As mentioned in a previous paragraph, well-run truancy intervention programs, including CTBs, have been shown to work. So far, however, no studies have been conducted on the fidelity of implementation of different CTBs across the state. Also, there is still much to

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<sup>38</sup> Benton & Franklin Counties Juvenile Justice Center: A framework for community-based truancy reform. September, 2013; Truancy Manual for Spokane County School Districts. Spokane County Models for Change Initiative (n.d.); Clark County Truancy Manual: A partnership between Clark County Juvenile Court, Educational Service District 112, and Clark County School Districts. 2013. Spokane County Toolkit for Community Truancy Board Replication. 2012.

learn about the effectiveness of the CTB approach with students who differ according to the types of needs that act as barriers to attendance.

This report also found dire educational outcomes for students who are petitioned truant, especially those who were first petitioned at younger ages. As George (2011) and others have pointed out, truancy is usually a symptom of long-standing and often intersecting risk factors, including poverty, insecurity in the family, and special educational needs. Truancy is a symptom that rarely appears in isolation; rather, it may precede or accompany school disciplinary problems, drug abuse and/or other juvenile court involvement.

One important finding of the present study is that petitioned truants are not only in danger of failing in school, but they have already been failing in school, often for years. Another important finding is that petitioned truants are only the veritable *tip of the iceberg* -- many more truant students never receive petitions and therefore never come into contact with the courts. It is not surprising that the earlier the student is petitioned truant, the less likely he or she is to succeed in school. Many middle school students, or even younger students, may be chronically truant, struggling in school and disengaged, without receiving a truancy petition. They continue without support, perhaps to receive a truancy petition in their later years, or perhaps to drop out of school altogether. While more research is needed, it is likely that young petitioned truants are, again, only the tip of the iceberg.

The juvenile court system cannot reach those youth who are eligible for, but who do not receive, truancy petitions, nor can they make up for years of lost schooling through time-limited programs. Students must be identified earlier, before truancy becomes a problem. School-court-community partnerships can work effectively in preventing

## Key Findings

1. The total number of truancy petitions filed per year is now nearly equal to the total number of all other juvenile offender filings, combined.
2. Statewide, less than 36 percent of the most chronically truant students actually receive truancy petitions.
3. Truant students are more likely to be non-white, and to be eligible for school-based special education, FRPL, migrant, or homeless services.
4. Nearly half of all truants in grades 6 or higher would go on to face juvenile offender charges within 4 years.
5. 8% of the study cohort spent time in juvenile detention in relation to a truancy case.
6. Most petitioned truants were credit-deficient with a cumulative GPA equal to a "D" average.
7. Over 60% of all petitioned truants in grades 9 to 12 had dropped out of high school 4 years later.
8. The younger the student at the time of the first truancy petition, the less likely he or she is to graduate from high school.
9. 11 of 29 responding courts operate CTBs.
10. 31% of Washington State students are enrolled in districts with school/court CTBs.
11. Most juvenile courts occasionally use secure detention for truant youth.
12. Courts face many barriers to providing effective truancy programs.
13. School districts that operate CTBs are more proactive in filing truancy petitions.

truancy, but only by linking effective prevention to existing interventions.

The development of effective policy and programs requires time and experimentation, combined with accurate measurement, analysis, and reporting. In doing so, we must not lose sight of the fundamental mission of these policies and programs: improving the life chances of children at risk of disengaging from school, dropping out or disappearing, and remaining confined to a life of severely constrained options. There are clear signs that Washington's communities, schools, and courts have learned valuable lessons from experience, as shown in schools and courts coordinating action, and interventions, such as community truancy boards, that show promise in identifying and responding to risks and needs that form barriers between students and the goals of positive educational experience and graduation from high school. The time appears ripe for further development of effective approaches to prevent and respond to truancy, whether school-based, court-based, or community- and team-based.

### Limitations of the Present Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The present study relied on a survey of juvenile courts only. Many schools and school districts have programs designed to prevent or intervene in truancy long before the student comes into contact with the court, and these programs would not have been identified in the present analysis. Future studies should include a detailed survey of available truancy prevention and intervention programs in schools and school districts, with a particular focus on CTBs and other school/court/community partnerships. A vigorous search for effective responses to truancy should encompass both school- and court-based interventions. It is necessary to become familiar with truancy prevention from all perspectives, including the schools and the larger community. A related research goal should be to identify the various factors involved in a school's or district's decision to file a truancy petition with the court.

Most of the data on truant youth came from court referrals, limiting interpretation of the results. First, school districts' filing trends over time (presented in Section III) do not capture any impact of school-court CTBs that intervene prior to the petition filing stage. In 2015, a bill was introduced in the Washington State Legislature that would allow districts to refer students to CTBs after the fifth unexcused absence in a month instead of filing a petition. Some CTBs already have such programs. Future studies should be designed to capture these and other differences in CTB practices across sites and to compare differences in programs with differences in outcomes.

Given that we had data on court-referred truants only, we had no way of assessing differences between truant students who did or did not receive petitions, nor can we speculate about the relative impact of receiving a truancy petition. Future research could compare students with similar rates of unexcused absences who do and do not receive truancy petitions (and related services) to determine not just whether student characteristics affect chances of receiving a truancy petition, but also the impact of the petition process on school performance over time.

A related barrier was the lack of longitudinal data on unexcused absences. While individual districts have kept track of their own unexcused absences over time, these data were not considered to be sufficiently consistent and reliable to be released via the CEDARs K-12 database until the 2012/13 school year. This was not soon enough for the data to be of use in the present study. It is hoped that future studies will be able to match students by unexcused absences, as well as track outcome for far longer than the three years available in the current study.

The court officials who responded to the survey or engaged in early reviews of this report had particular concerns about truancy among elementary school students. In the view of many, elementary schools are reluctant to file truancy petitions on younger students, leading to more chronic truancy and school failure, which only comes to the attention of the courts during the middle and high school years. Now that data on unexcused absences is consistently reported throughout the state, researchers are well-positioned to look at the potential of early, targeted truancy interventions to break the cycle of school failure for these students.

Finally, there was no way in the present study to link individual student outcomes to participation in a particular community truancy board or other truancy program. The research has consistently found interventions to be effective if they are well-implemented and directed to the needs of the students and his or her family (McKinney, 2013). It is critical that we continue to employ sound research and evaluation strategies, including recording standardized information about court responses in the AOC's information systems and linking program participation to individual student outcomes, in order to assist local courts and schools to meet the diverse needs of the youths and families that they serve.

## Policy Recommendations

1. Truancy now accounts for nearly one-half of all referrals to juvenile courts in Washington State, but courts face restrictions on the use of available funding for truant youth. Juvenile courts and schools should have access to dedicated sources of funding and technical support to operate evidence-based truancy intervention and prevention services, including community truancy boards.
2. Juvenile courts and schools should jointly develop and establish shared, clear and measurable objectives for the truancy petition process.
3. Establish sustained data collection (with data integrity), analysis, and reporting on the performance of truancy-related prevention programs and interventions in Washington State to identify effective practices.
4. Establish minimum criteria for effective truancy prevention programs, including CTBs.

5. Encourage and support the use of WARNS as an inexpensive and simple assessment tool to identify the individual needs of truant youth.
6. Provide ongoing technical assistance to juvenile courts and their partner school districts to support them in using data to evaluate the degree of success of their truancy reduction interventions and to adapt their practices as needed in response to analysis of performance and outcome data.
7. Develop and maintain a school-level inventory of school-based truancy-related practices.
8. Focus on early grades identification of attendance problems, disciplinary problems, and school failure. Engage the parents of younger students not attending school as early as possible to give students and families the optimum opportunity for skill building and school success.
9. Establish mechanisms to stay abreast of recent research in this rapidly developing field and to quickly translate and disseminate research findings to policy makers, program designers, and practitioners.

For example, school engagement, performance, and truancy are part of an increasingly vibrant field of academic research. Programs such as Positive Action (Lewis et al., 2013), career academies (WSIPP, 2009), community truancy boards, and others are being deployed and evaluated in multiple sites across the country, and it will be helpful to monitor and adapt to the evaluation findings.

10. Repeat the current inventory of court-based truancy-related practices on a regular basis, adapting the survey as practices and information needs evolve over time.



**Technical notes:**

**HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES**

Students were flagged as being “enrolled” in school in a given school year if they were enrolled in a public school in Washington State any time in a given academic year. The K-12 education data include enrollments and withdrawals from any public school throughout a given academic year, and in most cases will include an “exit code” indicating the reason the student left the school, if applicable. The most common exit codes include “graduated with/regular diploma”, “transferred”, “unknown”, “dropped out” or, if at the end of the school year, “continuing”, meaning they are expected to continue in the same school the following academic year.

The P210 enrollment codes were used to determine the high school outcomes through 2009-2010, while the CEDARS withdrawal code was used to determine outcomes in 2013-2014. The decision rules for creating the categories were as follows: Deceased. ZZ code any time in the 6 year follow up period. If this code appeared it took precedence over all other codes. Graduated. A code of “GO”, “GA20”, or C321. Following OSPI standards, students who completed with a certificate of completion of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), coded as C2, were also included in the category of graduates. In contrast to OSPI standards, those who received a GED (Code C1 - General Education Development) degree in lieu of a high school diploma were not counted as high school drop outs, but were instead included in a separate category, which also included GED completers as identified in the SBCTC database. Drop-out. Any “D” code. Continuing. The student was still enrolled with no exit code at the end of the last year for which data was available, 2013-2014.

The category of “disappeared” is not a formal exit code. It is used here to refer to students who withdrawal from a school, often accompanied by an exit code indicating they “transferred to another district”, but never re-enroll in public school: they “disappear” from the state K-12 database. This was the case for 42% of the high school cohort. An additional 18% had exit codes indicating they had dropped out, meaning that they had followed a more formal process.

While a certain percentage of the “disappeared” students may have left the state, a previous study with data from the same source found that almost 90% students in this category were still living in-state but had never returned to school (Coker, et al, 2012). Students that may have chosen to finish high school by enrolling in a community or technical college were not included in the ‘disappeared’ category if they had completed a GED or a CTC degree or certificate.

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# INVENTORY

The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) is conducting an inventory of current juvenile court-based practices or programs targeting truant youth across Washington State. It is NOT the purpose of this survey to evaluate the effectiveness of any particular program, but to better understand and describe the varieties of truancy-focused programs in place across the state. The results will be reported in an upcoming 2014 Washington State Truancy Report, and with the WAJCA's permission may be used for other reporting purposes as well.

We are asking each county juvenile court to complete this survey. The ideal respondent would be either the Juvenile Court Administrator or another court employee who is knowledgeable about truancy practices in your jurisdiction. This survey will take an average of ½ hour to complete. If you are unable to complete the survey from beginning to end in one sitting, you will be able to return to where you left off by clicking the link on the same computer where the survey was started.

This survey contains a combination of forced-choice and open-ended questions. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer before you can move on. If a particular question requires an answer but does not apply to you, please put "NA" or "none".

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please email them to [wscrc@courts.wa.gov](mailto:wscrc@courts.wa.gov).

Thank you for your participation.

Interview Record

**\* Juvenile Court:**

**\* Informant Name:**

**\* Informant Job Title:**

**\* Email Address for Contact:**

## Section 1.

Standard court procedures in place for dealing with petitioned truants in your jurisdiction.

**\* 1. Please briefly describe the standard court process in response to a typical first-time truancy petition in your county.**

**\* 2. Does your court use any sort of screener or risk assessment with truant youth?**

Yes

No

# INVENTORY

**\* a. If yes, what is the name of the screener?**

**\* b. When is the screener used?**

**\* c. Do all petitioned truants complete this screener, or just some?**

all

some

**\* d. If only some youth complete the screener why are they chosen to do so?**

**\* e. Briefly describe how the results of the screener are used.**

**\* 3. Is there a court employee(s) dedicated to truancy cases?**

Yes

No

If yes:

**\* a. How many (and what FTE for each)?**

**\* b. What are their job title(s)?**

# INVENTORY

**\*c. What is their role in the truancy process? (briefly describe)**

**\*d. Do they work with school districts, and if so, in what capacity?**

**\*e. Does this employee(s) serve all the school districts in your county? If not, why not?**

**\*4. Are there school or district employees who work with the courts on truancy cases?**

Yes

No

**\*a. If yes, which school districts? (please list all)**

**\*b. Please list their job titles and briefly describe their role(s) in the truancy process.**

**\*5. Do the schools and courts share data about petitioned truants? If yes, all districts or just some?**

Yes

No

All

Some



# INVENTORY

**\* a. If yes, which school districts? (please list all)**

**\*6. Do you have a system or process to educate school districts about the court truancy process?**

Yes

No

**\* a. If yes, please describe briefly.**

## Section 2.

Interagency, community, or school-court partnership programs to address truancy.

**\*1. Does your court provide, or is your court involved with any programs or services (other than the traditional truancy petition filing procedures) to address truancy, including community truancy boards?**

Yes

No

## INTERAGENCY, COMMUNITY, OR SCHOOL-COURT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS TRU...

Section 2 cont.

Please address the following questions for each program that you currently have in place. If you have more than 3 programs or would like to provide additional information, please indicate this in the "comments" section at the end of the survey, and if necessary a WSCCR employee will contact you to obtain the additional information either via email or over the phone, as you prefer.

The last question in this section is "Do you have another program to enter information about?". If you select yes, you will be directed to a new page with the same list of questions for information about your next program. If you select no, you will be directed to the next section of the survey.

# INVENTORY

**\*1. Name of program or service:**

**\*2. Is this program a community truancy board?**

Yes

No

**\*3. Do you have similar versions of this program with different school districts?**

Yes

No

**a. If yes, how many districts do you partner with on this type of program?**

**\*4. Is this program implemented pre- or post-filing?**

Pre

Post

**\*5. How long has this program been in operation?**

Years

Months

**\*6. Who is the lead agency for this program?**

Court

School or District

Other (please specify)

# INVENTORY

## \*7. Which agencies/partners are involved in this program?

School

Districts

(please list

all school

districts

involved)

Community-

based

organizations

(please list

all CBOs

involved)

State

agencies

(please list

all)

Other (please

list all)

## 8. How is this program funded? (check all that apply)

County

State

Becca funds

Other (please describe)

## \*9. How and why are youth referred to this program? (e.g., school screening, truancy petition filed, student found in contempt, or others)

## \*10. In your estimation, what percentage of petitioned youth receive the services of this particular program?

## \*11. Briefly describe the program elements and activities, including but not limited to the following elements: Meetings (where, who, and how often?); family involvement; principle activities; input of school personnel and other members.

# INVENTORY

**\*12. How long are youth typically involved in this program?**

Years

Months

**\*13. What incentives are used to encourage youth and/or families to follow through with the program requirements? (list all)**

**\*14. What sanctions are used if the youth/families do not follow through with the program requirements or drop out?**

**\*15. Do you track outcomes for this program ?**

Yes

No

**\*a. If yes, what outcomes do you track?**

**\*b. How are these outcomes tracked?**

**\*c. For how long?**

Years

Months

# INVENTORY

**\*16. To your knowledge, has this program ever been formally evaluated for effectiveness?**

Yes

No

**17. If yes, is a public report available?**

Yes

No

**\*18. Do you have another program to enter information about?**

Yes

No

## INTERAGENCY, COMMUNITY, OR SCHOOL-COURT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS TRU...

Section 2 cont.

Please address the following questions for each program that you currently have in place. If you have more than 3 programs or would like to provide additional information, please indicate this in the "comments" section at the end of the survey, and if necessary a WSCCR employee will contact you to obtain the additional information either via email or over the phone, as you prefer.

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Post

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(please list

all school

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based

organizations

(please list

all CBOs

involved)

State

agencies

(please list

all)

Other (please

list all)

## 8. How is this program funded? (check all that apply)

County

State

Becca funds

Other (please describe)

# INVENTORY

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Months

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Section 2 cont.

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# INVENTORY

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Post

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Years

Months

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School or District

Other (please specify)

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School

Districts

(please list

all school

districts

involved)

Community-  
based

organizations

(please list

all CBOs

involved)

State

agencies

(please list

all)

Other (please

list all)

# INVENTORY

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County

State

Becca funds

Other (please describe)

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Years

Months

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# INVENTORY

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**\* b. How are these outcomes tracked?**

**\* c. For how long?**

Years

Months

**\*16. To your knowledge, has this program ever been formally evaluated for effectiveness?**

Yes

No

**17. If yes, is a public report available?**

Yes

No

## Section 3.

Follow up questions

# INVENTORY

**\*1. What community resources have you used or barriers have you encountered in trying to implement or sustain truancy intervention or prevention programs?**

**\*2. What practices have been most effective in improving attendance for truant youth, in your view?**

**\*3. What sanctions are used, even occasionally, in your county for truants who are found in contempt? (Please check all that apply and very briefly describe if necessary)**

	Yes	Yes, but only after other sanctions have failed	Sometimes	Never
Detention with purge conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Purge conditions without detention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detention for specified length of time with no purge conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordination of Services (COS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day, weekend, or after school program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other and/or Comments

**\*4. Does your court use purge conditions for truants?**

Yes

No

# INVENTORY

**\* a. Please list the most common purge conditions.**

**\* b. How many hours per week?**

**\* c. What are they required to accomplish to meet the purge conditions?**

**\* 5. Are you satisfied with the current sanctions used by your court for truant youth found in contempt?**

Yes

No

**\* 6. If authorized by statute and/or adequately funded, what additional programs might your court be interested in adopting that you believe would address truancy risk factors and/or improve school attendance for those identified as truant?**

**\* 7. Based on your court's experience in working with the local school districts on truancy issues, how would you characterize the effectiveness of your collaborative efforts with the schools?**

Very effective / effective in almost all cases

Somewhat effective in most cases

Mixed - Effective in some cases, ineffective in others

Effective in very few cases

Unable to judge

# INVENTORY

**\*8. Do you know of any programs or services targeting truancy in your county that were available in the past but have since been discontinued?**

Yes

No

If yes:

## **\*Program 1**

Name:

Start date:

End date:

Why did the program end?  
(funding or other reason)

## **Program 2**

Name:

Start date:

End date:

Why did the program end?  
(funding or other reason)

## **Program 3**

Name:

Start date:

End date:

Why did the program end?  
(funding or other reason)

## **Additional Comments**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, your participation is appreciated.

If you have any questions or comments you would prefer to email please send them to [wsccl@courts.wa.gov](mailto:wsccl@courts.wa.gov).