

**STUDY OF TRUANCY AND DROPOUT PREVENTION**  
*Identified Issues*

**Issue — There is no statewide definition for truancy.**

**Recommendations**

1. Request that the Department of Education update their resource, *Improving School Attendance, A Research Guide for Virginia Students*.
2. Request that the Virginia Department of Education, in cooperation with the Commission on Youth, develop a definition for truancy.
3. Other ideas?

**Issue – School divisions’ accounting on truancy do not provide enough detail on actual truancy practices and intervention efforts.**

**Recommendation**

1. Write a letter to the Board of Education requesting that a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) be issued in response to the petition filed in May 2009. This petition requested the development of regulations for reporting of student absences from school; disposition, implementation of attendance plans for students with excessive absences.
2. Other ideas?

**Issue – There needs to be greater focus for truancy reduction efforts at the elementary school level.**

**Recommendations**

1. Encourage school divisions to include in all of their truancy prevention programs evidence-based programs that reduce truancy in elementary school.
2. Request that the Department of Education disseminate information to school divisions on effective programs which reduce truancy of elementary school-aged youth.
3. Request the Virginia PTA/PTSO share with its membership the importance of school attendance for elementary-school students.
4. Other ideas?

**Issue – The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Acts supports programs that prevent violence in and around schools; prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; involve parents and communities; and foster safe and drug-free learning environment that supports student academic achievement. However, funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools was not included in President Obama’s budget and was not reinstated by the House of Representatives. There is already a shortage in Virginia of school-based prevention programs that address issues such as violence prevention, anger management, conflict resolution and other behavioral health needs.**

**Recommendations**

1. Write a letter requesting that existing funding levels under the Safe and Drug Free School and Communities Act be reinstated in the federal budget.
2. Monitor the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB – 2010).
3. Other ideas?

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**Issue – There are barriers to information sharing within law enforcement (e.g. court service units and school resource officers).**

**Recommendations**

1. Introduce legislation to amend the *Code of Virginia* to give law enforcement limited access to information from court service units and school resource officers on truant students.
2. Request the Department of Juvenile Justice/Department of Criminal Justice Services to include in future trainings, clarification on information sharing between school resource officers, court services units and law enforcement.
3. Other ideas?

**Issue – There are statewide inconsistencies with the intake process for truancy cases, particularly with filing CHINSup petitions.**

**Recommendations**

1. Request that the Department of Juvenile Justice provide additional training on intake procedures when filing CHINSup petitions.
2. Other ideas?

**Issue – Compulsory attendance laws do not apply students who are referred to alternative education and who have been long-term suspended or expelled.**

**Recommendations**

1. Amend Section 22.1-279.3 of the *Code of Virginia* to include, as a part of the parent's responsibility, their child's participation and attendance if their child is referred to an alternative education placement and when all parties agree to that placement.
2. Other ideas?

**Issue – With current budget cuts, localities need more flexibility in the current mandated procedure of pupils who fail to report to school for a total of five scheduled school days for the year.**

**Recommendations**

1. Amend Section 22.1-258 of the *Code of Virginia* to give more flexibility to local school division by consistently stating that "the school principal, his designee or the attendance officer" is responsible for notifying the parents; making direct contact with the parents; and developing the student's attendance plan.
2. Other ideas?

**Issue – Classroom management skills are not adequately emphasized in teacher education curricula/programs.**

**Recommendations**

1. Request the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia to investigate the feasibility of including classroom management skills in Virginia's Teacher Education Programs.
2. Include classroom management skills in continuing education programs.
3. Other ideas?

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**Issue – Local attendance practices may be inconsistent with the *Code of Virginia*.**

**Recommendations**

1. Encourage school divisions to review their current practices and policies as they relate to attendance.
2. Encourage school divisions to revise their attendance policies if they include the practice of failing students if they receive a certain number of absences.

**Issue – The 140-hour seat rule may be a barrier to graduation. Guidance is needed on how this rule may be waived for students who can demonstrate course mastery.**

**Recommendations**

1. Request the Virginia Department of Education to re-issue the guidelines regarding § 22.1-253.13:4 of the *Code of Virginia* which allows schools to establish procedures to promote students without completing the 140-hour class so they can obtain credit for such class upon demonstration of mastery of the course with the recommendation of the division superintendent. Request that the Virginia Alternative Educators Association and the Virginia Education Association be included in this effort.
2. Request the Virginia Department of Education issue a Superintendent's Memorandum which outlines the actual guidelines when Superintendent's may waive the 140-hour seat rule.
3. Other ideas?