



7-30-2010

Addressing Truancy Is a Complex Challenge

Barbara A. Babb

University of Baltimore School of Law, bbabb@ubalt.edu

Gloria Danziger

University of Baltimore School of Law, gdanziger@ubalt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all_fac

 Part of the [Courts Commons](#), [Family Law Commons](#), and the [Juvenile Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Barbara A. Babb & Gloria Danziger, Addressing Truancy Is a Complex Challenge, *The Baltimore Sun* (2010)

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at ScholarWorks@University of Baltimore School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@University of Baltimore School of Law. For more information, please contact snolan@ubalt.edu.

Home → Collections → Law Students

Related Articles

Raising attendance rates in Baltimore City schools [Letter]
August 28, 2014

Tackling truancy at its source
June 11, 2008

In mock court, real help for students
February 18, 2007

Find More Stories About

Law Students

Addressing truancy is a complex challenge

July 30, 2010

Recommend 0

0

Tweet

0

G+1

While the recent op-ed, "The importance of showing up" (Commentary, July 30), rightly emphasizes the link between school attendance and achievement, we are troubled by the authors' emphasis on programs that tend to focus on a "quick fix" rather than those that address the many complex problems that underlie truant behavior.

It is critical to develop a continuum of interventions into truancy, ranging from a brief "reminder" telephone call to parents to prosecution in the courts, only as a last resort. The article mentions several programs that seem to be designed for the early stages of truancy: posters, a new early warning system that flags poor attendees, recruitment by after-school providers (although if students are not in school in the first place, chances are they are not going to be there after school either), and cell phone text messages.

What about the numerous students who do not have cell phones or any working telephone number? What about the students who choose to ignore efforts by school administrators and faculty to persuade them to come to school? What about the thousands of students and families struggling with such profound problems that school becomes a low priority?

Our experience over the past five years implementing and operating the University of Baltimore School of Law Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) Truancy Court Program (TCP) tells us that, in the vast majority of truancy cases, we must first identify the reasons why a child is missing school.

The TCP has increased attendance rates by truant students an average of 65 percent across the schools in which we operate. The TCP, a voluntary program for students and their parents, works because it creates a team of individuals representing the school, a volunteer district or circuit court judge, law school staff and faculty, law students, and service providers who care deeply about the truant student and his or her family. The team meets with the child and his or her parent or caregiver every week for 10 weeks in the fall and again in the spring. This non-punitive program works precisely because it brings together individuals who can identify why a child is not coming to school and can create long-lasting solutions to truancy.

Our schools must be equipped to provide the interventions necessary when a child misses school. In some cases, it can be as simple as a few reminder telephone calls or providing an alarm clock to make sure that the child wakes up in time. Many cases of chronic truancy, however, resemble that of Shelly D. (not her real name), a student at one of the schools participating in the TCP last year.

Shelly often stayed home to take care of her mother, a drug addict. She was responsible to make sure her younger siblings were ready for school, which left her no time to get ready for school herself. Not surprisingly, Shelly fell behind at school to the point where she could not catch up without tutoring. By the time Shelly began the TCP, she felt alone, disenfranchised, and hopeless.

No number of cell phone calls, posters, or after-school programs can provide the help that Shelly and students like her need.

The op-ed correctly concludes that we must "all pay attention to attendance and teach students that in school, as in life, showing up matters." What we also must realize is that the way to do this in many cases is to put in the long, hard work that is necessary to address the complex problems facing these students.

Barbara A. Babb and Gloria Danziger

The writers are, respectively, director and senior fellow of the University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Families, Children and the Courts.

See Also

Advertisement

- 1. Private School Rankings by State
- 2. Private Boarding Schools
- 3. Best Private Schools
- 4. Top 10 High Schools
- 5. Public High Schools
- 6. Top IT Schools
- 7. School of Technology
- 8. Top Vocational Schools

MORE:

Ashe's revelation is journalism's newest shame

Midnight miscegenation Sexploits: 'Bulworth' reinforces rather than undercuts certain racial stereotypes about white men and black women.

A deadly safari ends in a cry for answers

Twin gets life without parole for murder BALTIMORE COUNTY

Parted twins' future bright Surgery: After a virtual reality rehearsal, a Johns Hopkins doctor leads the successful separation of Zambian joined-at-the-head twins.

One twin convicted of killing runaway BALTIMORE COUNTY



[Index by Keyword](#) | [Index by Date](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Please note the green-lined linked article text has been applied commercially without any involvement from our newsroom editors, reporters or any other editorial staff.