

**Port Angeles School District
Truancy-Outreach Group Report
June 01, 2009**

BACKGROUND

In 1993, a 13 year-old runaway named Rebecca Hedman (“Becca”) was murdered in Spokane, Washington, far from her home in Tacoma. A group of legislators came together and successfully pushed for legislation that was designed to prevent situations like Becca’s from happening again. The law passed and codified as Chapter 28A.225 Revised Code of Washington (RCW) in 1995. The so-called “Becca Bill” addresses several areas of public policy, including those affecting truancy, at-risk, and runaway youth.

WHAT IS TRUANCY OUTREACH?

In 2002-03 the Port Angeles School District decided to create a Truancy Outreach Group, a broad-based community leadership panel who give advice and support improvement in an attempt to prevent unexcused absenteeism. The group meets every other month beginning in September and ending in June. Members include individuals from the local Rotary, AmeriCorps, Peninsula College, Juvenile Services, Serenity House of Clallam County, Communities That Care, Dream Center, Bridges to Parent Voice, Clallam County Commissioner(s), Clallam County Attorneys, Olympic Educational Service District 114, and the PASD.

This brief report summarizes the efforts and achievements of the various programs, what they have to offer to the community, and truancy data representing the changes from school year 2005 through 2009. A list of the Truancy–Outreach Group membership is included in Appendix A.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Rotary Black Tie Program

The Rotary Black Tie Program offers a variety of services: academic support, motivational assistance, transportation, and rewards to students participating in the program. Chuck Hatten reported that the noon Rotary will be having a fundraiser for the program on Wednesday, June 17, 2009 at the Crabhouse. For every \$5.00 donated your name gets entered into a drawing for a gift, such as a quilt, or gift certificate. No reservations needed.

AmeriCorps/High School Tutor/Mentor

The AmeriCorps tutor/mentor program’s objective is to partner with teachers and support staff towards the social and academic success of a targeted group of students. During the 2009 school tutoring was available in the Career Center Monday through Thursday, before school at 7:00, and after school starting at 2:45.

Peninsula College/Upward Bound Grant

Upward Bound is a federally funded college preparatory program that offers assistance to low income and first-generation, college-bound high school students. The focus of Upward Bound is to develop skills needed for post-secondary education and to help its graduates enter and stay in college working toward a four-year degree. Upward Bound offers year-round tutoring, a six-week Summer Program, college preparation assistance, and more.

Serenity House of Clallam County

Serenity House of Clallam County (child advocate) provides support to children by strengthening the skills and knowledge of the parents, as well as providing direct services for the children. The program includes a link to services in the community, develop and implement activities to include youth camps, tutoring, mentoring, and group involvement and recreation opportunities.

Dream Center

The Dream Center is a drop-in day facility for homeless and at-risk of being homeless youth ages 13 through 24. The center provides hot meals, shower and laundry facility, hygiene products, food pantry, internet and phone use, and one-on-one case management for any youth or young person looking to change their current situations.

Olympic Educational Service District 114/High Risk Youth Program

The OESD 114 High Risk Youth Program provides services aimed to educate and support court-involved school-aged youths in Clallam and Kitsap Counties. The services provided begin with young people incarcerated in the two detention facilities and continues as they transition back to their home school districts, or other educational programs. Dedicated staff assists students with educational and vocational opportunities and coordinate their transition to/from the school programs.

Olympic Educational Service District 114/Building Bridges

The focus of the Building Bridges program is to address the needs of middle school through high school youth that might require additional assistance in completing educational requirements or enrolling back into school. Partnership goals include academic performance, increasing educational engagement, and increasing parental involvement in schooling. Tutoring is provided as needed to support classroom performance and assist with their Senior Culminating Project. One-on-one counseling is available to help students work through difficult social or family issues or direct them to appropriate services in the community.

Communities That Care

Communities That Care is an “operating system” for the Port Angeles community to work together to prevent youth problem behaviors, including substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop out, and violence. CTC is based on 3 principles of prevention science – Data driven decisions, tested effective programs and community mobilization.

Bridges to Parent Voice

This program is a parent and family advocacy program serving families in the Kitsap, Clallam, and Jefferson counties. Judith Libenow supports parents of children in the Port Angeles School District, and serves as a clarifying and connecting link between families and the staff of child serving systems with a focus on mental health. A parent partner advocates and assists families in communication and collaborative problem solving as well as support and resource information. Judith can be reached at (360) 808-3001, or the regional office: 888-216-4187.

Overall, the Truancy Outreach group feels that the intervention of these programs positively impacted students throughout the year.

DISTRICT TRUANCY SUMMARY

The Truancy-Outreach Group reviewed district-wide data on filings of petitions and contempt of court proceedings over the past four school years: 2005-06 through 2008-09. During 2008-09, the district schools handled a total of 250 petition filings with Clallam County, a significant decrease from the previous year. A brief review of Table 1 reveals that 61.5 percent of this year’s filings are attributed to Port Angeles High School, while Lincoln High School and Stevens Middle School combined drew 23.8 percent of the filings, and the elementary schools combined totaled 14.6 percent. This table does not report on parent filings at the Port Angeles High School or at the Stevens Middle School (9 parents, 1 parent two times). It also does not report on the Port Angeles High School student who was petitioned to court two times. Port Angeles High School students continue to represent the majority of the filings.

Table 1					
Port Angeles School District					
Truancy Petitions Filed					
School	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Percent
Port Angeles High School	249	260	216	147	61.5%
N. O. P. Skills Center	1	0	0	0	0
Lincoln High School	41	44	30	24	10.0%
Roosevelt Middle School	22	13	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stevens Middle School	40	24	44	33	13.8%
Fairview Elementary	3	0	N/A	N/A	NA
Franklin Elementary	0	6	0	4	1.7%
Jefferson Elementary	2	3	4	2	.8%
Hamilton Elementary	0	5	0	13	5.4%
Dry Creek Elementary	1	13	16	5	2.1%
Roosevelt Elementary	N/A	N/A	11	11	4.6%
Total	359	368	321	239	100.0%

PORT ANGELES HIGH SCHOOL TRUANCY SUMMARY

Table 2 Port Angeles High School Truancy Petition Filing Comparison 2007-08 - 2008-09				
Month	Petitions Filed		Change	
	2007-08	2008-09	Number	Percent
September	16	12	-4	-25%
October	39	32	-7	-18%
November	23	15	-8	-35%
December	23	8	-15	-65%
January	19	22	+3	16%
February	22	19	-3	-14%
March	32	14	-18	-56%
April	24	6	-18	-75%
May	18	19	+1	6%
June	0	0	0	0
Total	216	147	-66	-32%

Table 2, Port Angeles High School Truancy Petition Filing Comparison 2007-08 through 2009-09, displays petition filings for each month over the past two years. Comparing the 2007-08 school year to the 2008-09 school year, the number of truancy filings went down in the months of September, October, November, December, February, March, and April, but went up in January and May. This is a 32% decrease over all.

Table 3 Port Angeles High School Petitions Filed By Grade Level 2006-07 through 2008-09						
	2006 - 2007		2007 - 2008		2008 - 2009	
Grade	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Grade 9	54	20.8%	47	21.8%	36	24.3%
Grade 10	84	32.0%	74	34.3%	41	27.7%
Grade 11	89	34.0%	68	31.4%	51	34.5%
Grade 12	30	12.0%	22	10.2%	19	12.8%
Total First Petitions	257	98.8%	211	97.7%	147	99.3%
Petitions Filed Twice	3	1.2%	4	1.9%	1	.7%
Petitions Filed 3xs	0	0	1	.4%	0	0
Total Petitions	260	1.2%	216	100.0%	148	100%

Table 3, Port Angeles High School Petitions filed by Grade Level 2006-07 through 2009-09, disaggregates the data over the past three years. This demonstrates that the largest number of truancy filings is among grades 9-11.

IMPROVING PROCESSING OF TRUANCY AND CONTEMPT PETITIONS

Over the 2009 school year, Truancy-Outreach Group members continued discussing ways to support and reduce the number of petitions that staff find it necessary to file to comply with the statute. Port Angeles Schools continue efforts by:

- Maintaining school-parent contact before filing a petition.
- Ensuring that the filings are for the proper purpose and have the potential to make a difference.
- Developing a guide for students, parents, and staff to use to better understand the processes in place for supporting student attendance.
- Developing a better system for tracking petitions and contempt and where cases are in the process of the courts.

Table 4 details the volume of letters and truancy and contempt petitions that were generated by staff work at just the district’s comprehensive high school over the past three years. There were 280 total contempt of court filings during the 2006-07 school year, and 200 filed in 2007-08, a decrease of 28.6%. When comparing the 2007-08 school year to 2008-09, a 45% decrease in contempt filings. The volume of review hearings or hearings that were continued are not shown, however, the numbers are large.

REPORT ON IMPROVEMENTS

During the 2009 school year the Truancy-Outreach Group met in September, November and May. Group members shared their efforts and accomplishments. Each continues to enhance the outreach efforts in concert with the work of the Port Angeles School District’s staff.

Challenges

In January 2009, it was learned of a case filed in King County alleging that all students are required by statute to have an attorney appointed prior to their first truancy hearing. In the past, students were not offered an attorney until being heard on contempt. While the ruling was under review, all January truancy proceedings were continued to February, and all bench warrants on truant youths were quashed. The schools continued to file petitions on truant students during the month of January as required under the truancy law.

Table 4 Port Angeles High School Number of Petitions & Contempt Filings			
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Becca Letters	459	392	328
Total Petitions	260	216	147
1st Contempt	168	114	75
2nd Contempt	72	50	26
3rd Contempt	27	20	6
4th Contempt	9	11	2
5th Contempt	3	4	1
6th Contempt	1	1	0
Total Contempt Filings	280	200	110

Changes

In past years truancy cases were heard on Tuesday afternoons beginning at 3:00 p.m., often times ending at 6:00 p.m., or later. Because of this, beginning in January 2009, truancy court was moved to 2:00 p.m. If the calendar became too large, there was a Thursday truancy calendar added.

Scott Harker, Port Angeles High School Principal and chairperson for the Truancy-Outreach group, will be the assistant principal at Stevens Middle School next fall and will no longer lead the Truancy-Outreach meetings. Assistant Superintendent Michelle Reid will take over as chairperson.

The Truancy-Outreach Group plans to meet again this fall.

Superintendent’s Office
 Port Angeles School District
 216 East Fourth Street
 Port Angeles, WA 98362

Appendix A

Truancy-Outreach Group Membership

	Group Composition	Members	
1	Juvenile Court; Commissioner	Brent Basden	
2	Juvenile Services; Probation Officer	Danetta Rutten	
3	County Prosecutor’s Office; Prosecuting Attorney	Deb Kelly	
4	Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe; Education Director	Tracy Hosselkus	
5	County Prosecutor’s Office; Assistant Prosecuting Attorney	Tracey Lassus	
6	Peninsula College/Dean for Student Development/Upward Bound	Aaron Nygaard	
7	County Public Defender	Curry Andrews	
8	Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe; Language Teacher	Jamie Valadez	
9	Native American Interventionist; Elementary School	Rena Francis	
10	Native American Support Teacher	Brenda Lovik	
11	Native American Interventionist; High School	Michelle Charles	
12	High School Principal*	Scott Harker	
13	High School Principal	Cindy Crumb	
14	High School Secretary	Darla Ochs	
15	High School Attendance Officer	Marielle Eykemans	
16	Elementary School Principal	Kate Wenzl	
17	Middle School Assistant Principal	Bryan O’Donnell	

Appendix A, cont.

Truancy-Outreach Group Membership

	Group Composition	Members	
18	Rotary Club of Port Angeles/Black Tie Program	Chuck Hatten	
19	Assistant Superintendent*	Michelle Reid	
20	Assistant Superintendent	Mary Hebert	
21	Academic Intervention Specialist/OESD 114	Josie Mehew	
22	OESD 114 Educational Services Coordinator	Minnie Whalen	
23	Peninsula College/Upward Bound Grant	Maria Pena and Sharon Cline	
24	Communities That Care	Karen Meyer	
25	Juvenile Service Truancy Clerk	Linda Smith/Emily Eccles	
26	Dream Center	Deidra Newton	
27	PASD School Nurse	Resa Yamamoto	
28	Program Director Clallam AmeriCorp	Jacques Livingston	
29	Bridges to Parent Voice	Judith Libenow	
30	Principal/Stevens Middle School	Chuck Lisk	
31	Principal/Hamilton Elementary	Loren Engel	
32	Principal/Franklin Elementary	Nancy Pack	
33	Principal/Jefferson Elementary	Michelle Olsen	
34	Principal/Roosevelt Elementary	Doug Hayman	

Appendix A, cont.

Truancy-Outreach Group Membership

	Group Composition	Members
35	Juvenile and Family Services Truancy Prevention Officer, Probation Counselor	Angie Berglund
36	AmeriCorps/Port Angeles High School Tutor/Mentor	Jennifer Smith
37	Peninsula College/Family Literacy and Outreach Coordinator	Laura Brogden
38	Children’s Caseworker at Serenity House	Gwen McNeir
39	Responsible Behavior Development, PAHS	Ellen Fetchiet

**Chairperson
June 01, 2009*