

# AN OF PREVENTION

FAIRFAX COUNTY NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMUNITY SERVICES PREVENTION UNIT | ISSUE 8 | AUGUST-SEPT 2016

## STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM ENDORSED BY SCYPT

BY JESSE ELLIS, FAIRFAX COUNTY NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

At its June 1 meeting, the [Successful Children and Youth Policy Team \(SCYPT\)](#) endorsed a number of strategies designed to increase school attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism among Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) students. Historically, our response to absenteeism has been one of punishment, focused on school-based and court-based sanctions. However, such a response is not effective. There are myriad root causes of absenteeism – many reasons why a student doesn't attend school – and punishment almost never adequately addresses those problems. Therefore, in December 2014, the SCYPT requested the development of a more holistic, comprehensive, and effective strategy to address chronic absenteeism.

A Community Dialogue, held in September 2015, was attended by over 200 people, including teachers; parents; youth; FCPS staff (both school-based and from central offices); government employees from the juvenile court, police, and health and human services agencies; representatives of a number of community-based organizations; and many more. (See a recap in our [October/November 2015 issue](#).) After the summit, an Attendance Task Force was formed to develop an action plan reflective of best practices and the issues identified at the Dialogue.

The Task Force created an action plan divided into four goals, each of which includes a broad, multi-sector approach.

**GOAL 1** of the plan is focused on [promoting attendance through a positive school climate and supportive services](#). Strategies include an awareness campaign, informational resources directed to parents, and school-based and out-of-school programming designed to engage and interest students.

**GOAL 2** emphasizes the use of data, at the school and student levels, to allow for early detection and intervention. Strategies include a standardized process for how attendance is reported and monitored and the implementation of school attendance teams to review data, identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism, and identify trends in risk factors.

**GOAL 3** highlights a multi-disciplinary approach to [working with youth and their families](#). Strategies involve the development and implementation of consistent policies and practices around how organizations share information and collaborate.

**GOAL 4** of the plan is focused on [ensuring a coordinated and tiered system of interventions to promote school attendance](#). The proposed interventions range from universal (e.g., incentives for good attendance) to intensive, wraparound services for youth and families with the greatest need.

Each strategy in the action plan includes specific actions to ensure the strategy is implemented through an equity lens, designed to reduce the achievement gap and other disparities in attendance and achievement based on race, ethnicity, disability, or other factor; and to not have disproportionate impacts itself.

The SCYPT endorsed Goals 1, 2, and 3 at its June meeting, and workgroups have formed to begin implementation and/or to identify resources needed for implementation. The awareness campaign, for example, is anticipated to kick off this fall. The Task Force, however, did not request endorsement at the time for all of Goal 4 (the set of interventions), as more time was needed to work with program managers to ensure an adequate plan is in place to implement the specific programs being recommended. That team is currently working to revise the plan, and expects to return to the SCYPT for full endorsement of the plan this fall.

For more information, and to read the action plan, visit [bit.ly/ffxattends](http://bit.ly/ffxattends).



Over 200 stakeholders attended last September's Community Dialogue on School Attendance.

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# BOARDS JOINTLY ADOPT RESOLUTION ON RACIAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY

FROM FAIRFAX COUNTY AND FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEWS RELEASES



On July 12, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted the [One Fairfax Resolution](#); the Fairfax County School Board followed suit, adopting the same resolution at their July 28 meeting. The resolution directs the development of a racial and social equity policy to ensure all individuals in Fairfax have an opportunity to reach their highest level of personal achievement.

The resolution demonstrates the boards' intent to work jointly to build a vibrant, opportunity-rich society for all, built on an intentional racial and social equity policy. Its goal is to create One Fairfax, a community where everyone can participate and prosper. An intentional focus on racial and social equity positions Fairfax County to proactively and collectively, with schools and communities, including businesses, faith organizations, nonprofits and others, identify and improve policy and institutional strategies that will not just eliminate gaps, but increase success for all.

"One Fairfax emphasizes the importance of making County-wide decisions through the lens of racial and social equity," said Fairfax County Chairman Sharon Bulova. "This is a formal declaration that will help shape decisions regarding education, land use, zoning and public-private partnerships. I am proud to represent a county that values our diverse community and supports our students, residents, workforce, and business owners of every race, socio-economic status, and background."

Over the last several years, Fairfax County has undertaken several initiatives to address disparities in a variety of areas including juvenile justice, education, employment, self-sufficiency, health, and child welfare. Most recently, the Board of Supervisors recognized the importance of equity as a driver of the county's future economic success in its 2015 adoption of the Strategic Plan to Facilitate Economic Success; and the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT), comprised

of County and school leadership and community representatives, has identified racial and social equity as an integral component to improving educational, health, and life outcomes for youth.

"We are excited to work with the schools and all of our partners in SCYPT to collectively identify gaps and intentionally adopt policy and strategies that will help to ensure all youth have an opportunity to reach their full potential," said Patricia Harrison, deputy county executive of health and human services.

**One Fairfax** is intended to move the county beyond embracing our growing diverse population to implementing a growth model driven by equity. A racial and social equity policy provides both the direction and means to work together with schools and communities to eliminate disparities and build a vibrant and opportunity-rich society for all.

## RESEARCH UPDATE

### KEY PREDICTORS OF SCHOOL READINESS

Early childhood initiatives in Fairfax County and elsewhere take a whole child approach to school readiness, focusing on social skills, executive functioning, and health in addition to academic and cognitive skills. In this study, researchers analyzed data from nearly 5000 children in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort to determine the key factors that predicted poor school readiness. "Poor school readiness" was defined as low academic scores and problem behaviors in kindergarten.

Within the sample, about two-thirds of the children had good scores and behavior in kindergarten or likely had developmental delays (DD). The 24% of children likely ineligible for early intervention services (because of DD) and with poor school readiness outcomes were the subjects of

the study. The study assessed the impact of 26 potential predictors of school readiness in the individual, family, social, and economic domains.

Nine variables were predictive of academic problems, and nine were predictive of behavioral problems. Of these, four variables were predictive of both academic and behavioral problems: parental education below the bachelor's degree level, little or no shared reading at home, food insecurity, and fair/poor parental health.

The results confirm the need for a comprehensive approach to school readiness that engages children, families, schools, and communities. They point to opportunities for identifying children at risk for poor school readiness. The

authors note that "including identification of these risk factors in clinical [pediatric] practice, along with developmental screening and surveillance, may identify a large group of young children who have developmental-behavioral risks that could benefit from additional support." The results also identify key opportunities for intervention. Efforts to improve parental health and self-sufficiency are critical to school readiness as are those focused on behaviors like reading.

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Nelson, B.B., et al. (2016). Predictors of poor school readiness in children without developmental delay at age 2. *Pediatrics*, 138(2):e20154477.

# UPCOMING EVENT EXPLORING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

## 2016 VIRGINIA STATEWIDE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CONFERENCE

Monday, October 24, 2016 | Hilton Dulles, Herndon, VA

At the 7th Annual VPOST Conference, you will:

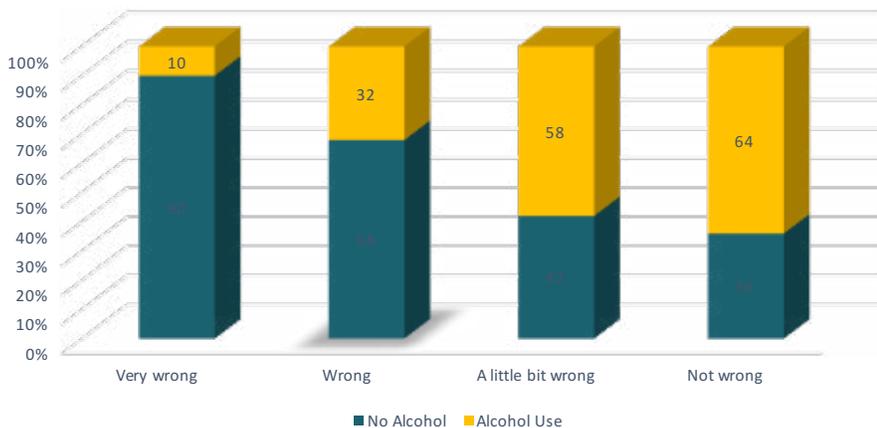
- LEARN the strategies, curriculum, and activities to address workforce development!
- GAIN hours of professional development from your choice of multiple breakout sessions to help kids succeed in school, work, and life!
- NETWORK with hundreds of Out-of-School Time Professionals from across the Commonwealth of Virginia!
- INTERACT with dozens of exciting programs, services, and resources in our Exhibit Hall!

Information and registration: [bit.ly/VPOST2016](http://bit.ly/VPOST2016)



# YOUTH SURVEY SPOTLIGHT ALCOHOL USE

## PERCEIVED PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE OF ALCOHOL USE AND SELF-REPORTED PAST 30 DAY ALCOHOL USE



Overall, 19% of Fairfax County 8th, 10th, and 12th graders participating in the 2014 Youth Survey (administered in Fall 2014) reported having used alcohol in the past month. One of the strongest predictors of such use is the extent to which youth believe their parents approve or do not approve of drinking. Students were asked “How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor?” Among those who responded “very wrong,” only 10% reported drinking in the past month. On the other hand, nearly two-thirds of students whose parents don’t think drinking is wrong have used alcohol in the past month. For more information on the Fairfax County Youth Survey, see [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/youthsurvey](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/youthsurvey); data from the 2015 survey will be released this fall.

# KNOW ABOUT

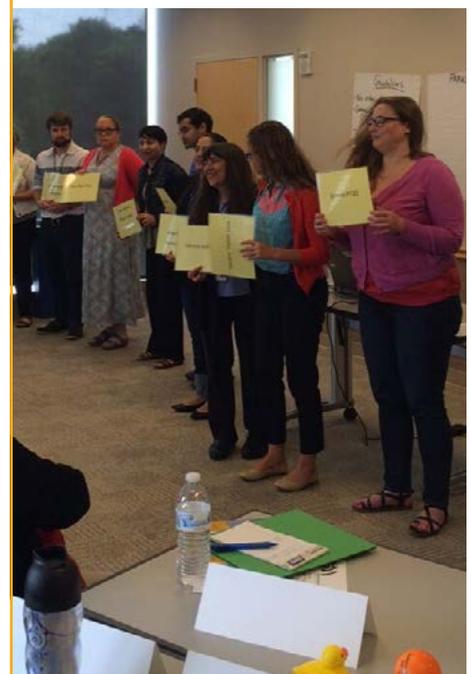
## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Mental Health First Aid is a public education program offered by the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) that can help communities understand mental illnesses, seek timely intervention, and save lives.

The program introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems; builds understanding of the importance of early intervention; and most importantly, teaches how to help someone who is in crisis or experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

The CSB offers MHFA classes in English and Spanish, a Youth MFHA course (for adults who work with adolescents), and a course for public safety personnel. It is an eight hour program, generally offered over two days.

Open enrollment classes are available, and the CSB can also provide customized classes for groups. There is a \$25 per person fee to cover the cost of materials. For more information, see <http://bit.ly/ffxMHFA> or check out the CSB’s [new MHFA video](#).



MHFA class participants explore beliefs around mental health (photo courtesy of the CSB)

## MESSAGING TOOLS

Every issue, we will feature messaging that you can use to share prevention resources available in Fairfax County. Feel free to, without attribution, use these messages in your outreach efforts.

# This Month's Resource: Computer Clubhouses



### Newsletter Article

The Clubhouse Network is an international community of 100 Computer Clubhouses located in 19 countries. In Fairfax County, six Computer Clubhouses focus on STEM activities to help prepare youth for next level learning and understanding of the world we live in. Clubhouses are located in the Gum Springs, James Lee, Bailey's, Willston, and Mott Community Centers and the Reston Teen Center. Each Clubhouse provides a creative and safe out-of-school learning environment where young people work with adult mentors to explore their own ideas, develop new skills, and build confidence in themselves through the use of technology.

The Clubhouse learning approach is designed to empower youth from all backgrounds to become more capable, creative and confident learners. It leverages new technologies to support new types of learning experiences and engage young people to become creative innovators. A typical day in the Clubhouse involves young people following their own interests, building a community, experimenting, and learning by designing. Program activities include Robotics, Computer Science, 3D printing, Virtual Reality, and prep for higher education.

Clubhouse membership is free for youth in kindergarten through 12th grade. The Clubhouses are open from 12 noon to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. For location addresses and phone numbers, please visit [bit.ly/ffxClubhouses](http://bit.ly/ffxClubhouses).

Press Release on  
AT&T Aspire Grant  
[bit.ly/2ay7IFi](http://bit.ly/2ay7IFi)



### Video

Math Thinker Program at Mott Computer Clubhouse: <https://youtu.be/awkUZYE9bfU>



### Facebook Post

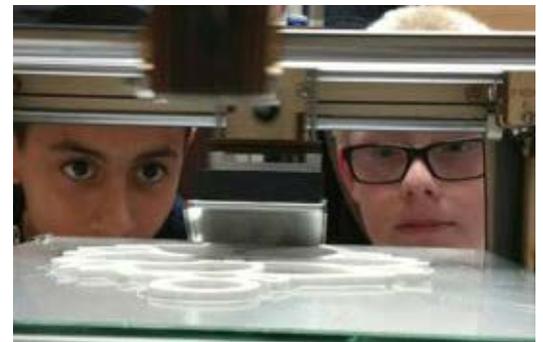
With a program focus rooted in STEM, Fairfax County's Computer Clubhouses enable young, inquisitive minds to stay ahead of the digital literacy learning curve and provide real-world application for the skills they are developing. Membership is free. [bit.ly/ffxClubhouses](http://bit.ly/ffxClubhouses)



### Tweets

Free Computer Clubhouses provide fun #STEM learning opps for kids across Fairfax County. [bit.ly/ffxClubhouses](http://bit.ly/ffxClubhouses)

Kids build robots, solve problems, & do much more at Fairfax County's free Computer Clubhouses. [bit.ly/ffxClubhouses](http://bit.ly/ffxClubhouses)



3-D Printing at the Reston Clubhouse 3-D Printing at the Reston Clubhouse

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