Successful Children and Youth Policy Team

November 4, 2015, Meeting Summary

Key decisions and actions are in **bold**.

SCYPT Members in Attendance:
> Gloria Addo-Ayensu, George Becerra, Bob Bermingham, Nanette Bowler, Tisha Deeghan, Judith Dittman, Pat Harrison, Cathy Hudgins, Tammy Derenak Kaufax, Rick Leichtweis, Jane Lipp, Chris Leonard, Lesley MacDonald (for Eileen Ellsworth), Megan McLaughlin, Mary Ann Panarelli, Andrew Wehrlen (for Ed Roessler)

Action Item – Endorsement of Report on School Attendance and Creation of Action Planning Task Force
> Jesse Ellis presented the report "Improving School Attendance: Recommendations for Developing a Plan of Action." Drawing on input from the Community Dialogue on School Attendance and a review of national evidence-based and best practices, the report includes a proposed framework for an action plan, as well as 12 key themes to be addressed in the development of strategies.

> A robust conversation regarding the report and attendance ensued. Topics were varied, but generally focused on the following issues:

> - *Framing the issue*: Language helps not only explain the issue, but clarify how it needs to be addressed. Examples include:
>   - Continually and strongly convey that this is an issue that requires the involvement of all sectors. It cannot be solved by the schools or the courts alone.
>   - Where applicable, keep language consistent with existing terminology and programs. For example, change "vocational education" to "career and technical education," as it is referred to in FCPS.
>   - Refer to the issue as one of attendance or absenteeism. "Truancy" has too specific a connotation.

> - *Root causes of chronic absenteeism*: Multiple "root causes" were identified, including:
>   - Lack of basic needs and poverty resulting in poor living conditions and/or the need for youth to miss school to work or provide child care.
>   - Mental/behavioral health issues, including, among others: school avoidance, oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety, and depression.
>   - Cultural norms that do not place a high value on education.
>   - Homelessness, family rejection, and other traumas.
>   - Mobility issues, including the difficulties that migrant families face enrolling in new school districts, families returning to their home countries for months at a time, and others.
>   - Lack of motivation for older students who see no reason to stay in school, as they (believe they) have no hope of going to college or getting a good job.

- *Opportunities for intervention*: Broad and specific ideas, as well as examples of best and promising practices, included:
  - Ensure human services are included in the spectrum of interventions.
  - Utilize public-private partnerships and other methods of business engagement.
  - Address families' language barriers.
  - Examine data to identify common needs of chronically absent students.
  - Redefine what a "successful" intervention looks like. Perfect attendance cannot always be the goal, nor should it.
  - Examine some existing (or soon to be existing programs):
    - In partnership with FCPS, Genesis Works will soon be offering internship opportunities for students who are at risk of dropping out.
    - The DFS Neighborhood Networks program is an early intervention.
    - Thurgood Marshall Academy in Anacostia offer a family resource room, business partnerships, and other resources.
  - The importance of connections with caring adults is critical.
  - Personal interventions with youth and families are needed. Identify the particular barrier to attendance for each youth.
  - Examine the school curriculum. Is it relevant to students? Does it get them excited for school? What keeps students interested?
  - Non-traditional education (e.g., alternative schools and programs) can be very successful.
  - Family engagement should be at the core. And "family" can be defined broadly – be sure youths' natural supports are included.
  - Invest in pre-kindergarten and addressing basic needs.
  - Maintain consistency in approach, policy, and procedure across the system(s).
  - Acknowledge limitations or requirements set by state law.

- *Action plan development*: Recommendations for the process of developing the action plan included:
  - Develop a timeline to ensure work gets done.
  - Include people at all levels, including teachers and students, in the development of strategies.
  - Look at the groups responsible for revising the FCPS Student Rights and Responsibilities and the Behavioral Health System of Care plan for possible ways to structure the task force.
  - Agencies should identify "low-hanging fruit" and immediately implement changes.
  - Identify how this work intersects with other efforts, such as the Behavioral Health System of Care, and factor in those intersections to avoid duplication.
  - Review the findings of the FCPS Graduation Task Force.
  - Look for opportunities to share and otherwise take advantage of existing resources across agencies and systems (e.g., trainings).
  - Look for legislative opportunities in the upcoming General Assembly session.
  - Use a System of Care approach to address the issue.

Without objection, the SCYPT endorsed the following:

- **Bob Bermingham and Mary Ann Panarelli will present the SCYPT with recommended legislative proposals regarding school attendance for the SCYPT to endorse at its next meeting;**
- **The Neighborhood and Community Services Prevention Unit will convene a task force to develop an action plan based on the guidance of the report presented to the SCYPT; and**
- **The task force will report on its progress, to include its work plan, back to the SCYPT at the February SCYPT meeting.**

Mr. Ellis agreed to ensure that the feedback provided by the SCYPT would be incorporated with the report as further guidance to the task force.

Information Item – Governance and Accountability Structure Update and Discussion
After briefly beginning a discussion on the SCYPT's governance and accountability structure, particularly how the team can interact with existing initiatives and collaboratives, it was decided that more time was needed for the discussion. It will be rescheduled for the December 2 meeting.

Information Item – SCYPT Meeting Locations Update
Jesse Ellis noted that several of the remaining SCYPT meetings for the 2015-2016 School Year will be held at the Gatehouse Administration Center. Meetings will continue to be on Wednesday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to noon. The dates and locations of remaining meetings are as follows:
- December 2, 2015 – Gatehouse Room 3050
- January 6, 2016 – Government Center Room 232
- February 3, 2016 – Gatehouse Room 3050
- March 2, 2016 – Government Center Room 232
- April 6, 2016 – Gatehouse Room 3050
- May 4, 2016 – Government Center Room 232
- June 1, 2016 – Gatehouse Room 3050