



# Agenda Report

September 20, 2010

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** City Attorney/ City Prosecutor  
**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TRUANCY PROGRAM**

## RECOMMENDATION

This report is for information only.

### Background:

This school year begins the third year of the City's Truancy Program, a joint project with the Pasadena Unified School District aimed at reducing the incidents of absenteeism and tardiness at local schools. During the last year District and City staffs have dedicated a great amount of time and energy to keeping students in school. Because of the successful efforts last year the program has an expanded agenda for the coming school year.

During the 2009-2010 academic year prosecutors:

- Addressed a Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) training of faculty, staff and community members.
- Spoke to hundreds of parents and students at Muir, Pasadena and Rose City High schools and Jackson elementary school at nine Parent meetings to address truancy. The most successful meetings also included District and school administrative staff, health and mental health providers, social service agencies and members of the Safe Schools patrol of the Pasadena Police Department.
- Staffed bi-weekly SARB hearings (the final step before referral for prosecution) to lend our expertise and due process aspects to the proceedings and to encourage follow-up whenever possible.
- Attended community meetings that addressed truancy including the ongoing "Student dropout committee" of All Saints' "City Conversations" group.
- Sought out and investigated other jurisdictions where programs combating truancy are finding success to measure the feasibility of incorporating those ideas.
- Engaged in plans for a new approach to the "truancy sweeps" by PPD.

### **Changes to the Truancy Program:**

On April 29<sup>th</sup> Mayor Bogaard, Superintendent Diaz and District and City staff attended the California Mayors' Graduation Summit in Sacramento. The summit was a directive of the California Mayors' Education Roundtable to "bring together key staff to share data, evidence-based and promising practices and programmatic strategies to address local challenges affecting students' educational and career success."

From that experience, using the established City/PUSD District joint staff committee, members of this team undertook to revamp the occasional "truancy sweep," take a new approach to those teenagers who have "dropped out" in order to recover them into the school system and to use the influence of the Mayor's Office to engage the community in making school attendance a community effort.

### **"Sweep Intervention":**

In July community members from D'Veal Family Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, PUSD mental health, the Los Angeles District Attorney's office, the Student Welfare Attendance and Safety Director, Hillside, Foothill Family Services, Pasadena Police Department, Hathaway-Sycamores, Young and Healthy, administrators from the Human Services and Recreation Department and the office of the City Prosecutor met to rethink the manner and purpose of the occasional truant sweeps conducted by the Police Department.

What emerged from the interaction is a completely new way of conducting these early attempts at identifying and returning recalcitrant students to school. The sweeps will now occur once a month instead of three to four times per year. Additionally, while the previous iteration was purely punitive, the sweeps now will also be an opportunity for the community to meet with students who have opted out of class and their parents. The various public/private partners will assess each student for his or her level of absenteeism and for those who have become a chronic truant immediate intervention will be made.

Parents who retrieve their students will also be afforded opportunities for counseling, parent education or other family needs. The first of these sweeps will take place in the next few weeks; each will be "hosted" by a different high school with their assigned social service agency responsible for seeing that each contacted student has a follow-up to the assessment. The District will keep statistics from each sweep and the generic information about the schools attended and support systems required will be used to further revamp the program.

This is a truly collaborative exercise and an example of how eagerly the various departments and programs want to help address the drop-out problem. A flow chart of the proposed process at each sweep is attached to this report.



