

Truancy Testimony

- Intro- name, credentials, school district, district size, years employed
- Role in attendance/truancy:
 - I send all certified letters requesting truancy meetings; follow-up with calls or home visits for no-shows
 - Cite or refer parents or students for truancy if attendance does not improve
- This year's stats for 1st-3rd quarters of school year:
 - 72 certified letters sent, 27 returned = 38% returned non-deliverable
 - Of the 45 signed for, 29 parents no-showed the requested meeting = 64% no-show rate for parents who received letters; only 22% overall attendance rate for letters sent
 - 72 letters sent = \$467.28 @ \$6.49 a letter.
 - \$363.44 spent on letters that resulted in a no-show meeting
 - \$175.23 spent on letters that were undeliverable
 - These stats reflect costs to a small, rural district. Imagine the cost for a district like Milwaukee that has schools as large as our entire district, and has a much higher rate of truancy. The cost would be astronomical.
- Additionally, certified letters in themselves cause a barrier to parents' attendance at truancy meetings. Because these letters have to be signed for, well-intentioned parents are not able to receive them because they are not at home during regular postal business hours to sign for the letters. While this requirement was original meant to assist in the truancy process, it has really done nothing but hinder the process.
- In the fall of 2014, state-wide survey was sent out to all school social workers in Wisconsin. This survey asked about prospective changes to state statute that would assist in the truancy process, and school social workers frequently cited the elimination of the certified letter requirement as something that would be helpful.

- Stop sending habitual truancy letters (certified). These are not effective but they are costly in both time and money that could be used towards more effective measures.
- Certified letters do not work - it costs a lot of money for schools.
- I feel the certified letters are a huge waste of money (as well as time). Many of the letters are returned unclaimed and very few parents show up for the truancy conference with the administrator.

Mallory Knipe

School Social Worker

School District of Black River Falls

Ph: 715-284-4357 ext. 3002



Wisconsin School Social Workers Association

Testimony to the Assembly Committee on Education in Support of Assembly Bill 172

May 7, 2015

The Wisconsin School Social Workers Association (WSSWA) would like to thank Representative Genrich, Representative Kitchens, Senator Harris Dodd and Senator Farrow, and the many other co-sponsors of Assembly Bill 172, for authoring this important piece of legislation. AB 172 is a common sense bill that will save money, encourage efficiency and make the very important responsibility of combating truancy more effective and timely.

Specifically, AB 172 will give school districts the ability to contact the parents or guardians of habitual truants via first class mail. Under current law, this must be done by registered or certified mail. AB 172 will also allow for simultaneous electronic communication.

In October 2014, the WSSWA Legislative Committee conducted a survey of our state's school social workers on the topic of truancy and attendance. The survey found that 97% of our state's school social workers are directly involved in their schools' truancy plan.

The survey also asked school social workers what changes they would like to see to state law to help in addressing the issue of truancy. Respondents pointed to the registered-or-certified mail requirement as outdated, inefficient and ineffective. In discussions since the survey was conducted, many leaders in the school social work community have highlighted the need to also include electronic means in this process.

WSSWA encourages committee members to support AB 172 when it is brought up in executive session. We thank you in advance for your support of this bill and look forward to continuing to work with you to update and improve our state's truancy and attendance laws.



May 7, 2015

Testimony on Assembly Bill 172

Chairman Theisfeldt and Members of the Assembly Education Committee,

Thank you for holding a hearing today on Assembly Bill 172 (AB172), which modernizes the state's truancy notification requirements. This straightforward piece of legislation has strong bipartisan authorship in both houses and enjoys the support of many educational stakeholders.

AB 172 modifies current law, which requires school districts to notify by registered or certified mail the parents or guardians of habitually truant students. This bill allows districts to contact the parents of truant or habitually truant pupils by first class mail. Additionally, it enables districts to supplement their physical communications to the parents or guardians of habitually truant pupils with electronic communications.

As you know, chronic truancy is correlated with challenging economic situations and family dynamics. The lives of all modern families are complicated and hectic, but this is especially true of families that face more significant barriers to success. Recognizing some of these complications, in the Green Bay School District and in schools across the state, this legislation eases communication between school attendance officers and the parents of truant students, helping each to fulfill their responsibilities to the children in their care.

Thanks to the members of the Wisconsin School Social Worker's Association for bringing this issue to the attention of my fellow authors and me. I sincerely appreciate their advocacy and work on behalf of the students they serve across the state of Wisconsin.

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and members for your consideration of AB172. If there are any questions with the legislation, I am happy to answer them.

