NCSE | National Center for School Engagement

Effective Marketing Through Truancy Posters

National Center for School Engagement

December, 2006

An initiative of the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children
303 E. 17th Avenue, Suite 400 Denver, CO 80203

Promoting attendance, attachment and achievement

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Effective Marketing Through Truancy Reduction Posters

Public awareness is an important way to promote positive behavioral change in the general public or for a targeted group. Tools to raise public awareness include disseminating information, creating knowledge, and building understanding. For a comprehensive campaign, multiple avenues should be used, such as:

- Newspapers
- Newsletters
- Press releases/conferences
- Annual reports
- Magazines
- Television
- Radio
- Brochures
- Posters
- Billboards
- Audiovisual presentations
- Photography/Art
- Websites
- Events
- Exhibitions
- Theatre
- Community meetings

In addition to spreading the message far and wide, keep in mind that a campaign can range in cost from minimal to expensive depending on resources. Examples can be seen in the following text that represents this range.

In April 2006, The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) hosted a national truancy prevention poster contest to find out what materials communities are using to support truancy prevention and to promote the importance of school attendance. While the contest called for posters, the materials submitted were also used as brochures, newsletters, t-shirts, and advertising on buses.

A voluntary panel of judges was composed of representatives from juvenile courts and community programs, as well as high school students, truancy officers, social workers, and psychologists. In addition to the criteria used for rating creativity, originality, and marketing, judges were asked to provide comments about what they thought and how they felt regarding the posters.

The judges found the following elements to be fundamental in whether or not a poster was “good”, effective, or had impact.

Audience:	Who was the target audience? Are there multiple audiences? Was the audience too broad or too specific? Would the audience experience an impact or be driven to action?
Appeal:	Eye catching Attention getting Too wordy Use of color Use of visuals/graphics
Message:	Clarity of message Wordiness Relevance Positive/Negative Appealing tag line/catch phrase Language
Facts:	Use of facts/statistics Accuracy of information

Sixteen entries were received and judged based on originality, creativity, and marketing appeal. Awards were given in three categories:

1) Community campaign
2) School district/area-wide campaigns
3) Individual school/Community campaigns

In addition, two Judge’s Awards were acknowledged based on other unique qualities.

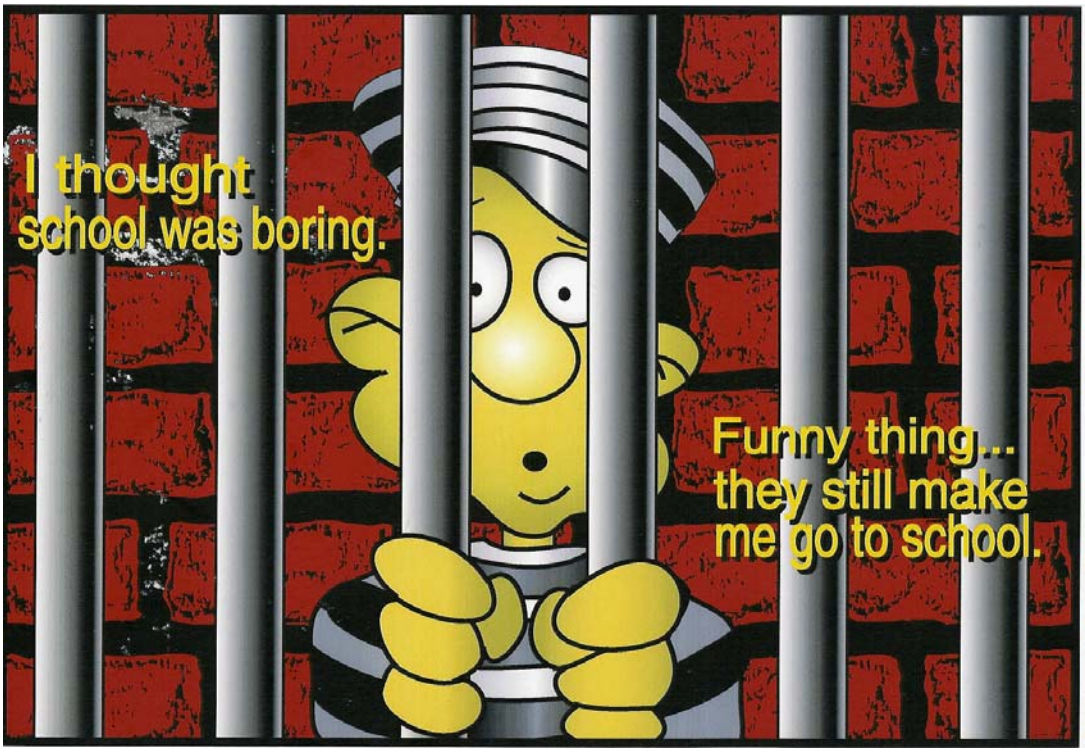
Each entrant was asked to describe how the entry was developed and give an example of its effectiveness. Below is a description of the award winners, photos or samples of the materials, and narrative about the campaign development.

The award for **“Community”** campaign went to Richard Williamson, LMSW-AP from Watauga, TX. His entry included hallway posters that could also be featured on websites.

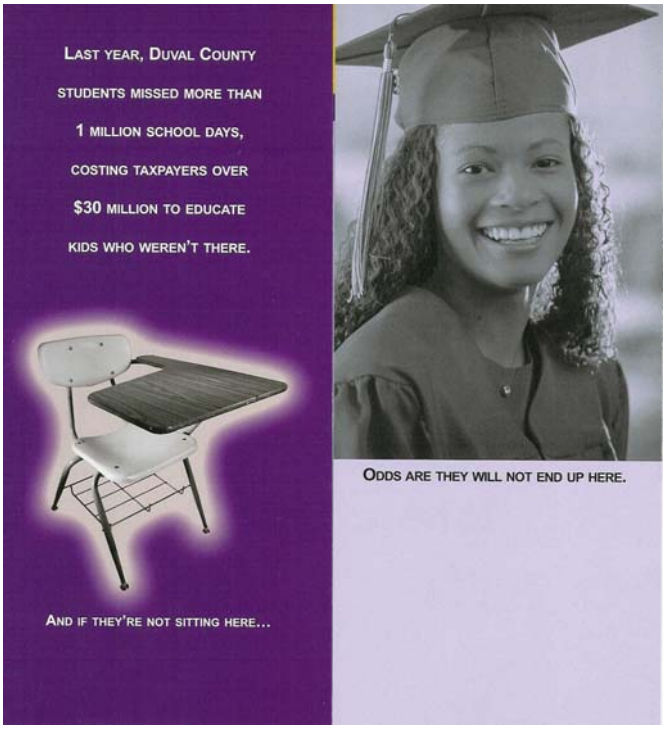
> He writes, “*A couple of years after leaving foster care, one of my former foster youth (a former truant) made drug-related choices resulting in incarceration. At my request, he drew the truancy-related artwork while incarcerated (he received about $3,000 for the artwork).When he was released, we went to a printer and used grant funding to print the series which is now in use in over 100 schools and other youth serving agencies in the Dallas area. While in the foster care system,*

he graduated from high school and an art school. The artwork was also used for brochures, display stands, four styles of book covers, posters, and websites".

By visiting www.truants.org, you can view the posters developed by this former truant.



The award for the "**School district/School area"** campaign went to the State Attorney's Office, 4th Judicial Circuit of Florida in Jacksonville. This entry included brochures entitled, "Count Me In For Learning". They are part of a public awareness campaign to stress the importance of attending school regularly. There are two versions of the brochure: one is for elementary school children, the other is for secondary school children. The latter is shown below. They were distributed to every student in Duval Public Schools.

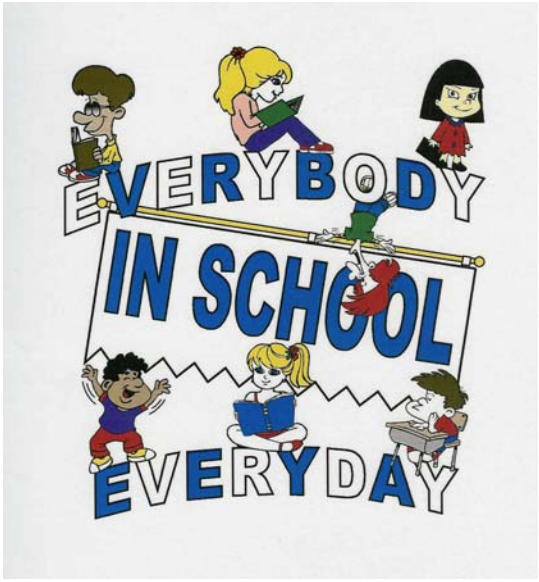


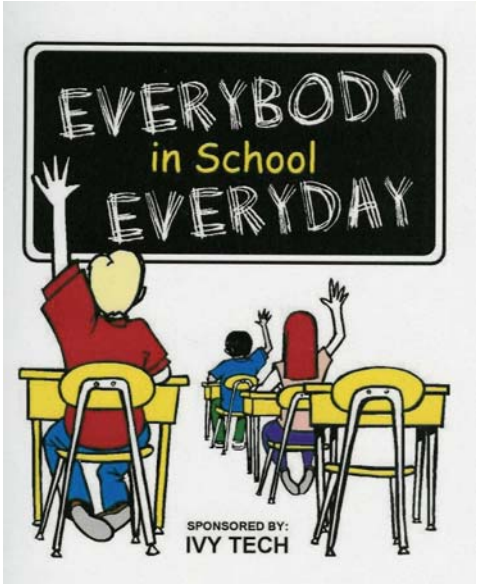
The Teen Court Program Coordinator in Jacksonville submitted the above entry along with a description of development.

> *"We have two brochures, one aimed at elementary children, the other at secondary children. The elementary brochure opens up to a picture of a smiling girl graduating, to reinforce the positive aspects of staying in school so the younger children have something to look forward to. The secondary brochure opens up to a picture of a jail cell, to reinforce where they could end up if they do not attend school regularly. This brochure serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of truancy. These brochures were developed by the State Attorney's Office and were widely distributed with the help of JUAT (Jacksonville United Against Truancy). JUAT is a collaboration of community partners dedicated to the reduction of truancy and public awareness of truancy in Jacksonville. These brochures were recently distributed to all Duval County students during the 2005-2006 school year. We have not had enough time to determine effectiveness, but the wide distribution is success in itself."*

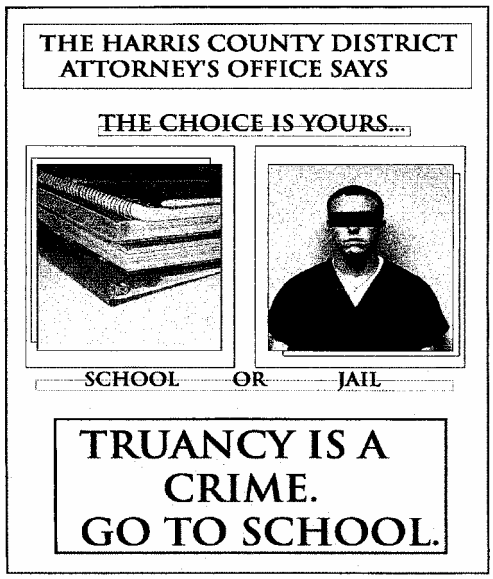
The award for **"Individual school and community"** campaign went to Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation in Indiana. The entry represented a local "Attendance Awareness Month" event. It included hallway posters and T-shirts with the message, "Everybody in School Everyday." The Coordinator of Student Services submitted the entry and reported a description of development.

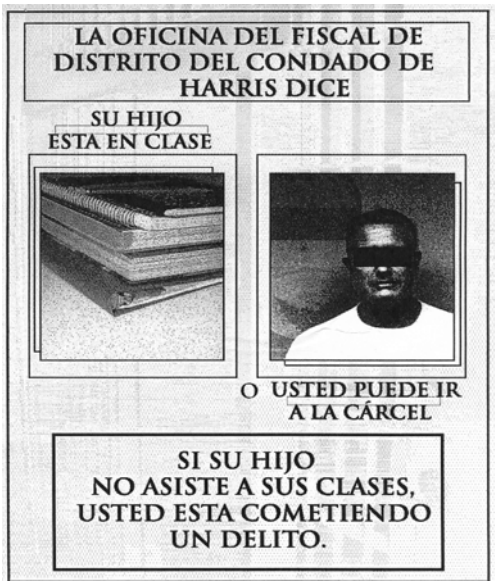
"*Posters were made and t-shirts were printed with the attached logo. The posters were displayed throughout the school buildings as well as in various public buildings such as the court house, the Office of Family and Children's Services, and local grocery stores. T-shirts displaying this logo were given to the winners of the elementary poster contest. One of the posters, completed by a 4th grade student, actually inspired the poster that will be used for Attendance Awareness Month in September 2006*."





One of two Judges Awards aptly named the **"*Straight-Up* Award"** was given to Harris County, Juvenile Division for their entry, "Harris County Stay-in-School Program Posters." This entry generated much discussion among the judges and was very controversial. It was recognized by youth as "straight-up" because it sends a clear message that truancy is serious. However, it is important that accurate messages be sent. Not all truants go to jail and not all parents of truants go to jail. Youth detention can be a consequence for a violation of a court order that mandates school attendance. These messages were published in both English and Spanish.





The second Judges Award, called the **"Eye-Catching Award"**, went to the State Attorney's Office, 4th Judicial Circuit of Florida in Jacksonville for a bus poster that was done in collaboration with Florida Community College. The poster was created as part of a class project. The student's favorite artwork was selected to be made into a bus poster. Part of its appeal is that it reaches multiple audiences.

A public awareness campaign is a great way to spread an important message to targeted audiences in a geographic area. NCSE encourages other communities to produce their own public awareness campaigns to reduce truancy and increase school attendance.

For more information, please visit our website: www.schoolengagement.org

The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) is an initiative of The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (CFFC). NCSE strives to build a network of key stakeholders who share the belief that improving school attendance and school attachment promotes achievement and school success.

National Center for School Engagement

NCSE was established as a result of more than a decade of educational research about youth out of the educational mainstream conducted by CFFC. The impact of this work has been the development of significant investments of state funds to reduce suspensions expulsions and truancy. Over five years ago, CFFC began working with the OJJDP, US Department of Justice to assist in the planning and implementation of pilot demonstration projects across the country. As projects developed, CFFC became the national evaluator of this five-year truancy demonstration project.

The culmination of ten years of program experience and research has identified truancy and school engagement as the centerpiece of NCSE's work to improve outcomes for youth who are at the greatest risk of school failure and delinquency. We are national leaders in applying research to help communities prevent and reduce truancy.

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