



Tennessee Department of Education
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**Annual Family Resource Center
Report**
(2014–15 School Year)

Printable report also available at:

<http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/family-resource-centers>

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Family Resource Center Annual Report

School Year 2014–15

Overview

Many of Tennessee's students face obstacles— poverty, hunger, homelessness, abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, family conflict—which threaten their ability to learn. While schools are not structured to solicit resources to address the challenges that threaten the basic needs of many families, the Family Resource Centers (FRCs) can. They have the ability to engage local businesses, civic and community organizations to play significant roles in addressing the debilitating problems faced by students and their families. Services and resources beyond the typical scope of the school system have been rallied through unique community partnerships created by the family resource centers.

Recognizing the barriers to school success facing many students, the General Assembly adopted T.C.A. § 49–2–115, FRCs to: *“maximize the potential learning capacity of the child by ensuring that school environments and neighborhoods are safe and socially enriching, that families are strong and able to protect children and meet their basic needs, and that children are physically healthy, emotionally stable, socially well-adjusted, and able to connect with enriching opportunities and experiences in their schools and communities. In order to enable children to attain the most benefit possible from the time they spend in educational settings, the family resource centers shall focus on providing information to families about resources, support, and benefits available in the community and on developing a coordinated system of care for children in the community in order to effectuate this purpose.”*

Family Resource Center Operational Organization

T.C.A. § 49–2–115 authorizes the development of school administered FRCs; however, school revenue constraints have restricted districts from developing FRCs without funding assistance. In 2014–15, \$3,050,000 was allocated by the state to districts to fund 103 FRCs in 79 districts serving over 150,000 students. FRCs receive an annual fixed award of \$29,611.65 per center. The district is required to provide a minimum match of \$20,388.35 for each center.

The FRC director is responsible for the overall operation of the programs, services, and activities of the FRC, as well as the supervision of other staff, interns, and/or volunteers that assist in the day to day operation. The FRC director is responsible for assuring that there are measurable goals established to direct the operation of

the FRC. The goals are directly related to problems and challenges that are identified by the advisory council and endorsed by the district.

Each FRC is required to have an advisory council that serves as the direction setting body for the FRC. The advisory council is composed of parents who are potential consumers, management representatives of state agencies that serve children and families, and other local non-profit social service organizations, philanthropic groups, and family support services providers whose focus is service provision within the community served by the FRC. FRC advisory councils operate with the authority and responsibility to develop and maintain a needs-based plan of operation relevant to the schools it serves and the community.

FRC programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues. Annually, FRC reports detail the specific goals, strategies, outcomes achieved, and students served. The report you are now reading is a summary of those 103 reports. To illustrate the diverse student needs and the varied activities implemented to meet those needs, quotes and brief statements in italicized font from individual FRC annual reports are presented throughout this summary report.

Goal

The family resource centers share a unified mission: to assist families through information and training and to help families learn to resolve problems through the collaborative efforts of many disciplines within the community—educational, mental and physical health, business and social services. The programs respect the strengths of families and build on those strengths rather than focus on weaknesses.

Family Resource Center goals, objectives, and strategies fall within one or more of the following domains:

- Attendance & Truancy
- Partnerships & Collaborations
- Behavioral Health & Social Emotional Learning
- Family Support
- Family Training & Education
- Family Engagement
- Academic Support

The goals established by each of the FRCs and the diverse strategies implemented to attain those goals yielded significant increases in student attendance rates and academic progress. Where individual student data was available, specific outcomes were noted.

Attendance & Truancy

For many years, educators, researchers, and policymakers focused on attendance chiefly in secondary school, viewing truancy or unexcused absence as an indicator of student disengagement and eventual dropout. This changed in 2008 when the National Center for Children in Poverty published a report detailing the extent of absenteeism—for excused and unexcused reasons—in the elementary grades. In the report, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For*, Hedy Chang and Maria Jose Romero used data from a nationally representative data set to document that one in 10 kindergarten and first-grade students misses at least 10 percent of the school year. All of the students who were chronically absent in kindergarten demonstrated weaker reading skills in first grade as well as math and general knowledge in the early school years.

Parents are often unaware of the corrosive effects of absenteeism and how quickly absences add up to academic trouble in the early grades. Some face challenges with health, transportation or housing that contribute to absences.

Truancy is an area of concern for Dyersburg City Schools. In partnership with Dyer County Juvenile Court, the district has received a truancy grant for the past 20 years. The grant allows the district to hire two truancy prevention specialists and develop a truancy board. Under the operation of the FRC, the truancy program provides services to students and their families to address barriers tied to truancy. In 2014-15 the program provided services to over 264 students. Students in the program showed a 93% improvement in attendance and a 55% improvement in academics.

Partnerships & Collaborations

FRCs are an essential participant in effectively serving children and their families. However, FRCs alone cannot address all the challenges faced by children and their families. Therefore, partnerships between schools and concerned stakeholders in the community and state agencies must be developed. The FRC director is the chief liaison between the FRC and its partners and community stakeholders. Through

these partnerships the FRC provides families the needed services and resources that will enable their children to be successful in school.

The Adopt-A-Class program celebrated its 23rd year in Lewis County Schools. Coordinated by the FRC, the Adopt-A-Class program promotes a partnership between school, family, and community to improve academic achievement, attendance, and educational experiences by matching community and parent partners with a classroom. Partners were asked to provide educational materials, equipment and resources for their adopted classroom. For the 2014-15 school year, a total of 78 classrooms, 4 libraries and the nursing clinic were adopted. The FRC received over \$48,000 in donations and volunteer hours.

Social and Emotional Learning

Today's schools are increasingly multicultural and multilingual with students from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Social and emotional learning provides a foundation for safe and positive learning, and enhances students' ability to succeed in school, careers, and life.

Research shows that social and emotional learning not only improves achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, but it also increases prosocial behaviors (such as kindness, sharing, and empathy), improves student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students (Durlak et al., 2011).

FRCs provide a variety of programs and services to meet the social and emotional needs of students and their families. These may include case management services, life skills sessions, *Why Try* curriculum, school-based mental health services, *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, and early intervention programs.

In Wayne County, the FRC states that the counseling services for at-risk students are their most successful programs. The FRC social worker works with students at-risk of dropping out of school, non-participants in school activities, and those with excessive absences to build trust and offer guidance. This year the director has worked with many students in crises situations such as attempted suicide, pregnancy, drugs, etc. One success story is the FRC social worker has been working with a student for the past two years who was addicted to drugs and dealing with severe depression. The social worker referred him to a rehab facility where he has been receiving the help he needed. He is now in recovery, graduated on time, and has a job after graduation.

Family Support

Some students bring a wide range of problems to school each day ranging from poverty, difficult and diverse family conditions, high rates of mobility to inadequate health care. Through their commitment to the success of *all* students, FRCs work to alleviate these problems through a myriad of services and resources that include weekend food back packs, school supplies, clothing, hygiene items, eye exams, dental care, assistance with rent and utilities, Christmas assistance, and summer feeding programs. By addressing the basic needs of students and their families FRCs seek to alleviate the impact these issues have on student success.

The Manchester City FRC and the WECARE program mark their 25th year of success serving over 350 students annually at Manchester City Schools. WECARE provides each student with a backpack filled with school supplies, a new outfit (including socks and underwear), a new pair of athletic shoes and hygiene supplies. All items are supplied with help from the community with the goal of leveling the playing field for these students as compared to their peers. In addition to receiving a hygiene pack, students also participate in hygiene education classes as well as free dental, vision, and hearing screenings by local volunteers.

Family Training/Education

Because children acquire the abilities to become responsible, caring adults and citizens of their society from the people who are most intensely involved with them, parenting is the most important and challenging job any of us can have; yet, there is very little formal training for this task and parents are often isolated and without adequate support networks. FRCs provide a variety of family training/education opportunities for families to include such programs as Love and Logic, Active Parenting, Parent Project, and 123 Magic.

Operating under the premise that parents are a child's first teacher, FRCs also offer opportunities for families to learn how to work effectively with their child on core subject areas such as math and reading.

The FRC in Haywood County hosted a variety of programs during the year to increase parental involvement and provide opportunities for parents to learn effective methods for working with their children. Curriculum nights were held at the beginning of the year featuring: "Slumber Number" math night, "Family Sweetheart Fall in Love with Reading Night", and "FROZEN" health and academic night. Another special program offered was "Table Talk for Parents of Students with Special Needs." This support group for parents of students with special needs began two years ago. The group offers parents a place to share both the challenges and triumphs of their children's developmental delay.

The most adequate predictor of student success in school is not family income or social status but the extent to which a student's family is involved. When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive; their children do better in school and that includes pre-school as well. FRCs offer families opportunities to become actively engaged in school through a variety of activities and programs that include: literacy programs, home visits, interpreter services, parent nights, and parent resource fairs.

The FRC in Lenoir City Schools is committed to child readiness and family involvement. FRC staff meet with each family who has a child entering preschool and invites parents to attend the Preschool Parent Camp. Over 90% of parents attended one day of the camp. The camp, Building Blocks of a Strong Education, includes:

- *A tour of the preschool wing by FRC staff, one of which is bi-lingual.*
- *Introduction of highly qualified teachers and staff.*
- *Welcome by principal.*
- *Presentation on encouraging families.*
- *Presentation from director of Lenoir City Schools, FRC staff, and Coordinated School Health.*

Academic Support

Poor school achievement is a concern and the focus of most current school improvement efforts. But poor achievement is also a concern because it is a predictor of problem behaviors in late elementary school (Hawkins, Lishner, Catalano, & Howard 1986) as well as middle and senior high schools (Hirschi 1969; Jessor & Jessor 1977). The term academic support refers to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school resources provided to students in the effort to help them catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school. FRCs provide a broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring sessions, summer learning experiences, after-school programs, and volunteer mentors to assist all students in a school.

The Maryville City Schools FRC, in collaboration with the schools, conducts an afterschool homework assistance program at Maryville Housing Authority for underserved poverty level students in grades kindergarten through high school. The homework assistance program has grown from 8 to 25 children who meet once a week for an hour and a half at the HUD apartment complex. Volunteers from the high school and the community are recruited to assist the students. One on one computer assistance is also provided. Each student is given a food pack for attending and a snack. The program has expanded to additional locations to include another housing authority complex and the United Way office located in a high poverty community. Students involved in the program have shown significant increases in academic achievement, as measured by a pre- and post-test, and in behavior at school, home, and community.

Evaluation

The programs and activities provided through FRCs are difficult to evaluate using traditional methods. Evaluation techniques are multi-faceted, interactive, continually evolving and reliant on the active involvement of committed individuals who contribute more than their jobs require.

FRCs rely on both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the success of their programs for students and families. Qualitative data utilizes feedback from teachers and school administrators as indicators of student success. Programs developed for families are evaluated through pre and post surveys to measure shifts in knowledge and attitudes. Quantitative data is collected for programs developed to improve attendance, academics, and behavior through school data. The quantitative data is reported on the annual outcomes report form submitted annually.

Future of Family Resource Centers

Over the years, FRCs have dealt with changing family dynamics and its impact on education. Despite limited resources, FRCs provide families with an accessible system of coordinated, integrated public and private sector services to strengthen families' abilities to support academic and life success of all children.

Moving forward, FRC efforts will align directly with Commissioner McQueen's strategic plan called *Tennessee Succeeds* (available here). The five priority areas of *Tennessee Succeeds* will serve as a guide to expand and enhance the work of FRCs.

- Early Foundations & Literacy: Building skills in early grades to contribute to future success
- High School & Bridge to Postsecondary: Preparing significantly more students for postsecondary completion
- All Means All: Providing individualized support and opportunities for all students with a focus on those who are farthest behind
- Educator Support: Supporting the preparation and development of an exceptional educator workforce
- District Empowerment: Providing districts with the tools and autonomy they need to make the best decisions for students.

FRCs will continue their important work towards building a support system for every student to help remove barriers that may hinder academic success and success in life. For further information about the FRC program please contact Pat Conner at Pat.Conner@tn.gov.