

The Truancy Reduction Program in Seattle: Evaluating the Problem-Solving Partnership

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**Prepared for the Seattle Police Department and the
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
November 2002**

This report and project were supported by Grant No. 1999-CK-WX-K005 awarded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice to 21st Century Solutions, Inc. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the law enforcement agency involved in the study.

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21st Century Solutions, Inc., a criminal justice consulting firm in Washington, DC conducted a national assessment of the COPS Office (U.S. Department of Justice) School-Based Partnership Grant Program. As part of this assessment, 21st Century Solutions, Inc. selected five jurisdictions for more intensive study. The Seattle Police Department and the Seattle Public School District and four other locations (Redlands, CA, Colorado Springs, CO, Westwood, MA and Spartanburg, SC) were chosen from nearly 120 potential sites. Selections were based on the size of the agencies and jurisdiction, school-based problem type, data availability, geographic location, and previous experience with problem solving efforts. This report provides information about truancy reduction, interagency cooperation and collaboration, and the outcomes of the problem solving strategy.

During the course of the study, staff from 21st Century Solutions, Inc. worked closely with the local evaluators, members of the Seattle Police Department (SPD), and staff at Aki Kurose Middle School Academy (AKMSA).

Working with the local evaluators, the national evaluators assisted in data collection efforts, analysis, and report writing. Staff interviewed key participants in the project, including school administrators and police personnel.

This report is divided into five sections. First, we provide information about the school-based partnership project in Seattle and describe the roles of the police department, school, and local evaluator. Second, we present our research questions and methods used in the process and impact evaluation. In section three, we describe the implementation of the truancy reduction project by using the problem-solving model (SARA) as our framework. In section four, we discuss the results of our impact evaluation, demonstrating the effects of the project on students, the school, and police. Finally, in section five, we present conclusions and recommendations regarding future efforts to reduce truancy in middle schools.

Section I. The School-Based Partnership Project in Seattle

In 1999, the Seattle Police Department (SPD) received a \$150,000 School Based Problem Solving grant from the Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to study and recommend interventions regarding truancy at the Aki Kurose Middle School Academy (AKMSA or Aki) in Seattle. The project was named the Truancy Reduction Initiative – School & Police Partnership (TRI-SAPP) Program.

AKMSA was chosen for its high truancy rates in comparison to other middle schools of similar size and socioeconomic background of students. The original focus of the grant was on truancy enforcement in a high school, but obstacles occurred that redirected the study to truancy prevention in a middle school. Aki Kurose Middle School was nominated to become the new partner, as it is located in the South Precinct area of SPD, the same location as the original high school. At project implementation, Aki Kurose was tied with one other school for the highest middle school truancy rate in the Seattle School District.

The SPD program was aimed at developing an in-depth understanding of the factors associated with truancy and its link to crime and delinquency. Researchers from the University of Washington (UW) under contract to SPD combined existing police and school records with survey information to obtain a detailed picture of how these factors intersect for different students. This information allowed project participants to make comparisons of the strength of different factors, and how those factors affect different groups of students. Evaluators began with the understanding that many factors contribute to truancy and that no one single factor could be isolated to improve attendance. Project stakeholders hoped to find areas where interventions could address a wide range of truancy-related factors.

The Seattle Police Department

The Seattle Police Department serves a population of 524,704 with 1,252 sworn officers and 657 civilians. In 1999, the SPD reported that 25 School Resource Officers (known as SET officers) worked in the city (LEMAS, 2000).

The department first began to implement community policing under Chief Patrick Fitzsimons (1978-1993) and the concept was refined under Chief Norm Stamper (1994-2000). In 1989, Chief Fitzsimons created Community Policing Teams (CPT) that adopted the community policing philosophy. Under Chief Stamper, the department created the Community Policing Advisory Council (CPAC), trained officers in problem solving and later established the Community Police Academy. With Chief Gil Kerlikowske at the helm (2000 to the present) the department has shifted its community-policing mission to include leadership development, “best practices” training, domestic preparedness, and having a police department whose operations and service are visible to the public.

Since 2000, the department has been under close scrutiny by the public because of problems in handling specific incidents, notably the WTO riots, a Mardi Gras celebration

that erupted into violence, and alleged racial profiling of Asian youth. Yet, residents remain satisfied with police services. In 2000, a citywide residential survey found that 75 percent of those surveyed felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods after dark. In addition, 80 percent of residents expressed satisfaction with police services. In that year, crime continued its ten-year decline, falling to its lowest levels since the late 1970s (Seattle Police, 2000).

The Seattle School District and Aki Kurose Middle School Academy

The Seattle School District is comprised of 79 schools and about 46,800 students. Ten high schools, 10 middle schools, and 59 elementary schools provide education to the public. In October 2001, white students comprised about 40% of the student body, and minorities about 60%. Based on the income level of their parents, 39.4% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. More than 10,100 students or 21% of enrollment have non-English speaking backgrounds.

During the 1999-2000 school year the average daily attendance for students was 91.3%, with White students having the highest rate, 92.8% and Native Americans the lowest, 86.6%. In the following school year of 2000-2001, average daily attendance increased slightly to 91.7%.

In terms of discipline, the number and rate of short-term suspensions and expulsions decreased in 2000-01 at all school levels. The high school short-term suspension rate was the lowest in 15 years. Long-term suspension rates also declined for high school and middle schools.

Aki Kurose Middle School Academy (AKMSA) is named for a Japanese American teacher of Seattle elementary school students. Ms. Kurose, who died of cancer in 1998, worked with students for over 43 years and won the Presidential Award for Excellence in Education and the United Nations Human Rights Award for her lifelong efforts for the cause of peace. She was the first Seattle teacher to have a school named in her honor.

In the 2000-2001 school year, an average of 555 6th, 7th and 8th grade students attended AKMSA each day, with 663 total students enrolled during the school year.¹ The student body of AKMSA is more ethnically diverse than other middle schools, as 47% of students are African-American, 31% are of Asian descent, 10% are of Hispanic origin, 10% are Caucasian, and one percent are Native American.

Many students receive free or reduced lunches – 68% as compared to 42% of middle school students throughout the district, indicating a lower average income per student compared to the district at large. Over 60% of students do not live with two parents, as compared to 40% district-wide. Aki's students scored significantly lower on state standardized tests than their counterparts throughout the district. Thirteen students (2% of total enrollment) were expelled and 188 students (28.4% of total enrollment) were suspended during that year.

¹ During the school year, 86 students transferred into AKMSA and 132 transferred out.

Compared to all middle schools, AKMSA is more diverse and poorer. Exhibits 1 and 2 show the enrollments, ethnic distribution, and free or reduced lunch numbers for Aki, three comparable middle schools, and all middle schools. Similarly, Exhibits 3 and 4 show outcome data for the same middle schools. Suspensions and expulsions declined in AKMSA and in all middle schools from 1999 to 2001.

Exhibit 1. 1999-2000 Demographics of Four Comparable Middle Schools

School	Enrollment and Ethnic Distrib.						Free or Reduced lunch		Not living with both parents	
	N	Nat Am	Afr Am	Latino	Asian	White	N	%	N	%
Aki Kurose	572	1.7%	48%	10%	30%	10%	389	68%	348	61
Hamilton	718	2.1	18	7	36	37	331	46	283	39
Meany	576	1.7	49	13	15	21	368	64	355	62
Mercer	812	2.0	26	6	55	10	496	61	343	42
All Middle Schools	8,539	3	22	9	27	40	3,624	42	3,435	40

From the Data Profile District Summary, December 2000, Seattle Public Schools

Exhibit 2. 2000-2001 Demographics of Four Comparable Middle Schools

School	Enrollment and Ethnic Distrib.						Free or Reduced lunch		Not living with both parents	
	N	Nat Am	Afr Am	Latino	Asian	White	N	%	N	%
Aki Kurose	607	1.5	47	10	31	10	387	64	341	56
Hamilton	750	2.0	19	7	36	36	379	51	317	42
Meany	563	2.7	50	12	18	17	274	43	289	45
Mercer	820	2.2	25	7	58	9	516	63	349	43
All Middle Schools	8,606	2.4	22	10	26	40	3658	43	3443	40

From the Data Profile District Summary, December 2001, Seattle Public Schools

Exhibit 3. 1999-2000 Student Outcome Data of Four Comparable Middle Schools

School	Enrollment		Transfers In/Out				Suspensions		Expulsions		
	Avg	Total	In	Out	Total	N	% of avg. enrollment	% of total enrollment	N	% of avg. enrollment	% of total enrollment
Aki Kurose	581	687	--	--	211	242	42	35	31	5.3	4.5
Hamilton	727	820	--	--	165	130	18	16	7	1.0	0.9
Meany	542	652	--	--	199	143	26	22	5	0.9	0.8
Mercer	817	932	--	--	214	269	33	29	19	2.3	2.0
Total all Middle schools	8,406	9,282	--	--	1,678	1,422	17	15	96	1.1	1.0

From the Data Profile District Summary, December 2000, Seattle Public Schools

Exhibit 4. 2000-2001 Student Outcome Data of Four Comparable Middle Schools

School	Enrollment		Transfers In/Out				Suspensions		Expulsions		
	Avg	Total	In	Out	Total	N	% of avg. enrollment	% of total enrollment	N	% of avg. enrollment	% of total enrollment
Aki Kurose	555	663	86	132	191	188	34	28	13	2.3	2.0
Hamilton	712	755	35	47	79	137	19	18	3	0.4	0.4
Meany	561	763	166	192	274	202	36	27	2	0.4	0.3
Mercer	819	930	109	109	182	213	26	23	5	0.6	0.5
Total all Middle schools	8,440	9,323	758	958	1,473	1,389	17	15	47	0.6	0.5

From the Data Profile District Summary, December 2001, Seattle Public Schools

Problem Solving Model

As part of the grant requirements, TRI-SAPP engaged in problem-oriented policing, using the SARA model, based largely on the ideas first put forward by Herman Goldstein in 1979. The model was refined in Newport News, VA in the mid-1980s by John Eck and Bill Spelman and offers a framework for approaching crime problems.² The four-steps include scanning, analysis, response, and assessment. The *scanning* phase is in essence problem identification. Its objectives are to define a basic problem; determine the nature of that problem; determine the seriousness of the problem; and establish baseline measures. An inclusive list of stakeholders for the selected problem should be identified in this phase.

Analysis is the heart of the problem solving process. The objectives of analysis are to develop an understanding of the dynamics of the problem; develop an understanding of the limits of current responses; establish correlation; and develop an understanding of the nature of the problem. As part of the analysis phase, it is important to find out as much as possible about each element of the issue (in this case truancy) by asking Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? and Why Not? about the victim, offender, and location.³

The *Response* phase is the step where the partners and stakeholders come together to determine appropriate strategies to solve the problem. This is accomplished by searching for strategic responses that are both broad and uninhibited. The response should follow logically from the knowledge learned during the analysis and it should be tailored to the specific problem.

Assessment is the phase where the stakeholders determine the effectiveness of the response. This information not only assists the current effort but also gathers data that builds knowledge for the future. Strategies and programs can be assessed for process, outcomes, or both. If the responses implemented are not effective, the information gathered during analysis should be reviewed.

Truancy as a Problem

Truancy is increasingly recognized as an important social problem among social policy decision makers, particularly at the state level. In 1995 lawmakers in Washington passed the Beca Bill to address the needs of at-risk youth. Aspects of the law were amended and clarified in 1996 and 1998. For enforcement purposes, the relevant subsection is RCW 28A.150.250. Essentially, this law describes the minimum amount of education that a school must provide, and defines 180 days as the minimum number of days in a school year. Most importantly, school districts that fail to fulfill the minimum education requirements will lose some of their state funding:

“If a school district's basic education program fails to meet the basic education requirements enumerated in RCW 28A.150.250, 28A.150.260, and 28A.150.220,

² Eck, John E. and William Spelman, *Problem Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice and Police Executive Research Forum, 1987

³ Spelman and Eck, 1989

the state board of education shall require the superintendent of public instruction to withhold state funds in whole or in part for the basic education allocation until program compliance is assured.”

The clear implication is that districts that are unable to keep their students in the classroom risk a loss of funding. Thus, the Beca Bill places increasing pressure on school and court officials to address truancy. The Seattle School District and the court system have taken steps to improve the measurement of truancy and to provide stronger and more systematic interventions into the behaviors of truant students.

In the Seattle School District and Aki Kurose, truancy reduction became a priority in recent years. Funding for truancy specialists was provided by the school district. AKMSA along with other high-truancy schools hired truancy specialists devoted to tracking truants and preventing truancy among students. The role of the truancy specialist is to send information to the School District and to file petitions with King County Court. In addition, the truancy specialist appears at the hearing to testify that truancy occurred.

Partners

To deal with the problem of truancy at AKMSA, a group of organizations and people came together under the grant to study and analyze the problem, formulate solutions, and determine the effectiveness of the response.

The Seattle Police Department, Seattle School District, AKMSA staff, YMCA staff, and the University of Washington were the principal stakeholders in the project. Representatives from SPD included the original TRI-SAPP project manager, and her successor. The Manager of the Research, Grants, and Corporate Support Unit oversaw the project. A lieutenant and School Resource Officer worked out of the South Precinct station and participated in meetings and strategy development. Two crime analysts from SPD also participated in meetings and the workgroup. At Aki the Principal and Truancy Specialist were the primary participants. The director of the Community Development Center of the YMCA assisted in the response phase of the project. Two doctoral students within the Sociology Department of the University of Washington served as the local evaluators. Other students became involved during the course of the project.

The Seattle School District played a major role in allowing access to the school and in providing relevant data to the local and national evaluators. As part of its routine, analysts from the Student Information Services Office (SISO) collect data on all students in the school district. These data include grades, disciplinary actions, attendance records including excused and unexcused absences, state test scores, and demographic characteristics. The analysts compile an annual report that includes a profile of the school district as well as individual school-level tables and charts. Through a memorandum of understanding with the police department and 21st Century Solutions, Inc., the Student Information Services Office provided the evaluators with individual level data to use during the analysis and assessment phases of the project.

In addition to these individuals, other stakeholders were involved at various times in the process. They included:

- The Office of the Mayor
- King County Superior Court
- King County Prosecuting Attorney
- Department of Neighborhoods
- Parks and Recreation Department
- Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
- NAACP
- Community Council
- Block Watches
- Faith-Based Community
- Senior Citizens Centers
- Family Support Center
- Masonic Lodges
- Atlantic Street Center
- It's About Time for Kids
- Adopt A Street
- Disenfranchised Youth

Section II. Research Questions and Methods

For this evaluation, we asked a number of questions related to implementation and the impact of the SARA model within SPD and in Aki Kurose Middle School. At each step of the SARA process we asked specific questions. For example, during the scanning phase we asked: What was done? By whom? Who were the stakeholders and key players involved in the process?

For the analysis phase we asked: What was the process for doing analysis? Who was involved? What types of data were used? What were the sources of the information? Did the partners look at the offenders, victims, and locations? How long was this phase (months, days)?

During the response phase we wanted to know what happened and who was involved. How was the response implemented? What resources did they draw upon to conduct the response phase? How long was this phase (months, days)? What were the challenges and obstacles encountered by those who participated?

In looking at the assessment phase we again stressed questions about who, what and how did things take shape? Were the anticipated effects obtained?

Evaluating the Impact of the Project

To assess the impact of the program we asked: What was the impact of the school-based partnership project on the police, school, and participants? What were the effects on truant students and those involved in the project? Was there a reduction in truancy at Aki Kurose Middle School Academy? If so, what can we say about truancy overall? What were the ramifications of this program on other schools in Seattle?

To answer these questions we conducted interviews with key stakeholders, analyzed survey results collected by the local evaluators and the school, analyzed data from the school district, observed response phase activities, and reviewed police data and documents, and newspaper articles over the two-year period.

Sources of Data and Data Collection

For the process and impact evaluations, we used multiple types of data. Those data included:

- Student Survey
- Seattle School District data
- Police data, including calls for service and police contacts
- Logs kept by tutors
- Interviews with key participants
- Focus groups with students and teachers
- Observations of activities

Student survey. Local evaluators at the University of Washington conducted a survey of students at Aki Kurose in Spring 2001. The purpose of the survey was to determine student perceptions of truancy and safety within the school. In addition, the survey explored with students their behavior in and out of school, the attitudes toward school, and peer relationships. Researchers also collected information about attitudes toward academic achievement, circumstances in their homes, and delinquency.

Seattle School District data. The Seattle School District's Student Information Services Office (SISO) collects and maintains data on all students in the school system. For 15 years SISO has collected individual-level data pertaining to attendance, discipline, grades, test scores, demographic information, and truancy. Each year the office produces an annual report, "Data Profile—District Summary," that contains aggregate information and individual school summaries. Through a memorandum of understanding, 21st Century Solutions, Inc. was able to obtain datasets from SISO that assisted in our evaluation efforts. These data will be further discussed in the impact section of this report.

Police data. Crime analysts with the Seattle Police Department provided the researchers with information about crimes known to the police within a two-mile radius of Aki Kurose and three other middle schools in the city. In addition, SPD provided data about arrests, victimizations, and suspects who went to school at Aki Kurose. Because of the confidentiality and sensitivity of these data (and the school district data) only two persons within the research team had access to the information. Once those data were analyzed all individual identifiers were deleted from the datasets. These data allowed the researchers to examine the links between delinquency and truancy at Aki.

Logs maintained by tutors. As part of the intervention, tutors from the University of Washington participated in the response phase. An independent study course was designed and the students received course credit for their tutoring activities. The tutors maintained logs of their activities as part of their requirement in completing the course. We were provided access to those log records.

Interviews with key participants. Dr. Uchida and Dr. Bynum interviewed stakeholders and participants in the problem-solving effort to determine their views and perceptions of the process.

Focus groups with students and faculty. The SPD program managers and university researchers conducted focus groups with students and faculty at Aki to determine their views of truancy and solutions to the problem. These groups met on occasion throughout the scanning and analysis phases of the project.

Observations of activities. The program managers observed the work of the tutors and the truancy specialist during the course of the project.

Section III. Implementation of the SARA Model

Scanning Phase

The scanning process began in Spring 2000 and included discussions with key stakeholders, focus groups with teachers, and group interviews with students. The problem type was determined during this phase of the process.

1. Stakeholder Discussions. During the scanning phase (and throughout the grant period), TRI-SAPP program managers met with many individuals who had a stake in attendance and truancy at AKMSA and the Seattle School District. Program managers held meetings with teachers, parents, school administrators, police officers, court caseworkers and others to ensure that key stakeholders were kept informed and that their viewpoints were represented in the project.

During these discussions, many problems were addressed and ideas discussed that would identify factors associated with truancy at Aki. Some of the major themes that emerged were:

- re-connecting students to the school,
- finding ways of making parents accountable,
- better and more frequent contact between the school and the SPD,
- encouraging positive interaction between youth and police, and
- keeping youth out of the court system.

The main responses that were implemented in this project were generated from the discussions of the TRI-SAPP taskforce meetings.

2. Teacher Focus Groups: The TRI-SAPP program manager and UW evaluators conducted focus groups with teachers to explore their opinions on the causes of truancy and possible solutions. Overwhelmingly, teachers saw parental involvement as the key and did not see a need for more school programming. However, teachers consistently saw a need for more resources at the school, particularly in the area of classroom assistance.

3. Student Group Interviews: The TRI-SAPP program manager and UW evaluators conducted interviews with a group of eight students from diverse backgrounds and varying attendance records in order to determine how students negotiated and manipulated the attendance system. The major themes emerging from these interviews were ones of isolation from the school community. All but one of the students had missed school without an excuse and knew how to do so without repercussions. Some students felt that they did not know an adult at the school that cared about them. Some students felt that their teachers did not like or appreciate them. Some positive elements about the school community arose, including a discussion about favorite teachers and activities.

Obstacles and Issues. During this phase, some obstacles became apparent. Teachers expressed their concern with the project – they mentioned that they were tired of studying the problem of truancy and felt that funds could be better spent on actual programs. Program managers explained that funding could not be allocated for responses to the

truancy problem because of the rules established by the grant program. Because of this problem, some teachers refused to participate. The principal and truancy specialist represented the school in most of the meetings with the stakeholders.

Analysis

The analysis phase began in fall 2000 and ended during the summer 2001. The TRI-SAPP program manager, crime analyst, local evaluators, and national evaluators were involved in this phase of the problem solving process. This group collected and analyzed survey data from the school, school attendance, performance, and behavior records and calls for service data from the police department.

From the scanning activities discussed above, a student survey was developed to obtain information on truancy at Aki that was not otherwise available. The school principal and staff were involved in this planning process, ensuring that questions reflected the interests of school officials. Prior to final distribution, the survey underwent a pilot test at another middle school to determine internal validity and for usability, clarity, and length.

Through this process the survey instrument was refined and condensed. The survey asked about:

- Characteristics of the students and their family; attitudes and values related to school; and social circumstances that affect school attendance.;
- Characteristics of the student's parental support, attitudes and academic history, ethnic and national background including languages spoken in the home, and the types and amount of family support for education;
- The student's attitudes and behaviors related to academic achievements, attendance, truancy, and delinquency; and
- Social circumstances including peer relationships and participation in school and community groups. The survey also sought information about group participation (in Aki Kurose and community activities) and to what degree those groups support school positive attitudes.

In preparation for the distribution of the survey, the local evaluator, truancy specialist, and TRI-SAPP program manager met with teachers at all three grade levels and provided training to them as they were to assist in the administration of the survey. About half of the teachers attended the briefings. The local evaluator administered the survey during the spring of 2001 over a two-day period. The survey was administered during two homeroom periods and reached about two-thirds of all students.

Findings from the Analysis Phase: Major Trends of Truancy

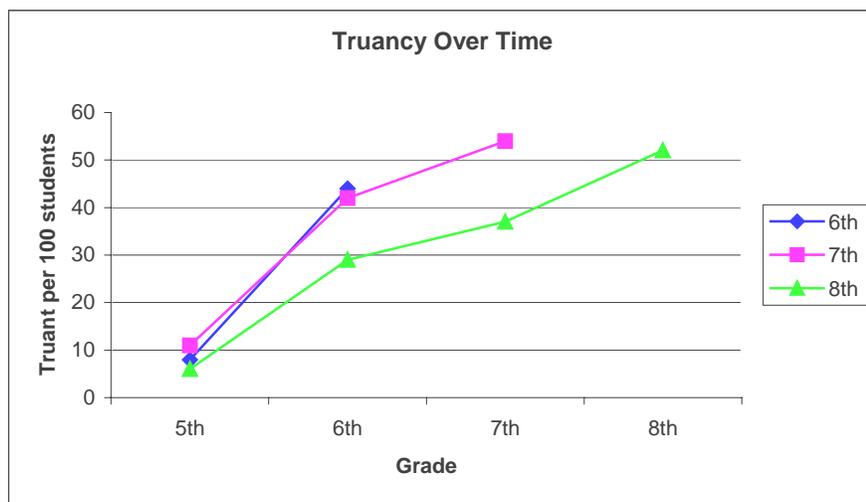
The student survey, combined with data from the Seattle School District's information office (SISO) revealed the truancy trends of Aki Kurose students. The local evaluators compared attendance by grade, sex, cohort (following a grade level as they progress

through grades), ethnic group, immigrant generation, and by the number of friends that a student has.

During the analysis phase the stakeholders found that there was a dramatic difference between elementary school attendance and middle school attendance. While around 10% of all fifth graders who went on to attend AKMSA missed five or more days during the school year, 30% of those students had five or more unexcused absences when they became 6th graders. During the rest of middle school, truancy rates increased more gradually. Exhibit 5 suggested to evaluators that interventions should target 5th or 6th graders in order to influence students in the process of the greatest increases in truancy.

Exhibit 5 Truancy Over Time

(For this graph, truant = 5 or more unexcused absences)



Additionally, current 6th and 7th graders had consistently worse attendance than 8th graders at each grade level since the 5th grade. This suggested that truancy was a growing problem among AKMSA students. Over 50% of eighth graders had more than five unexcused absences per year.

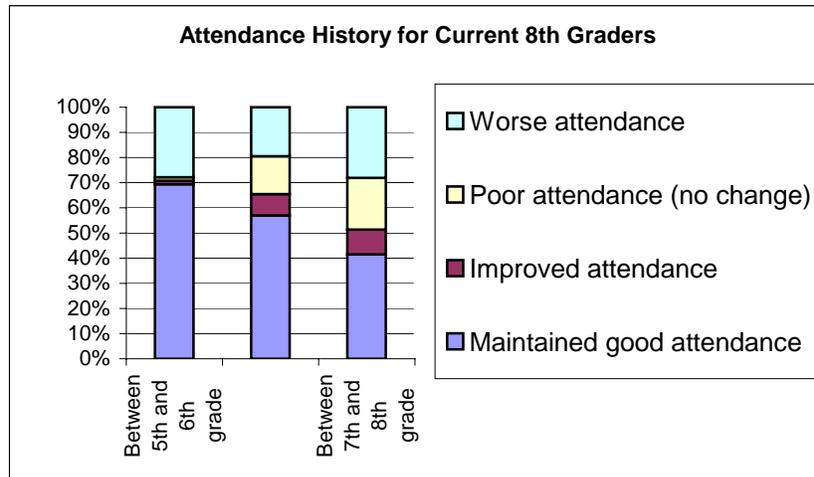
There was a strong perception among some taskforce participants that boys accounted for more truancy than girls. However, the analysis showed that boys and girls are about equally likely to be truant at all grade levels and general truancy patterns remained roughly similar for boys and girls through all three years.

Patterns of Attendance

The University of Washington local evaluators and TRI-SAPP manager also measured how patterns of attendance changed as students progressed through middle school (Exhibit 6). Although about 10% of students moved to a lower level of truancy

Exhibit 6 Attendance History for 8th Graders

(“Worse” is defined roughly- as moving from a lower category of truancy to a higher category. Good 0-4.5; Occasional 5-9.5; Chronic 10 and over.)



during the 6th and 7th grade transitions, the dominant trend was a slight increase in truancy within the school population. Forty-one percent of 8th graders who were occasionally truant (5-9 days) in the 1999-2000 school year became chronically truant (10 or more days) during the 2000-01 school year.

Evaluators also analyzed how truancy varied across ethnic groups at AKMSA. There was a great deal of variation in the distribution of truancy levels within ethnic groupings. No one group stood out as the least or most truant. While Samoan/Polynesians had a high level of truancy the total number of students in this category was very small. (Exhibit 7) While race was an important lens through which to view problems, and in discussions, race repeatedly arose as a level of analysis by which to understand problems, from these data it was not an indicator of truancy.

Exhibit 7 Truancy by Ethnicity

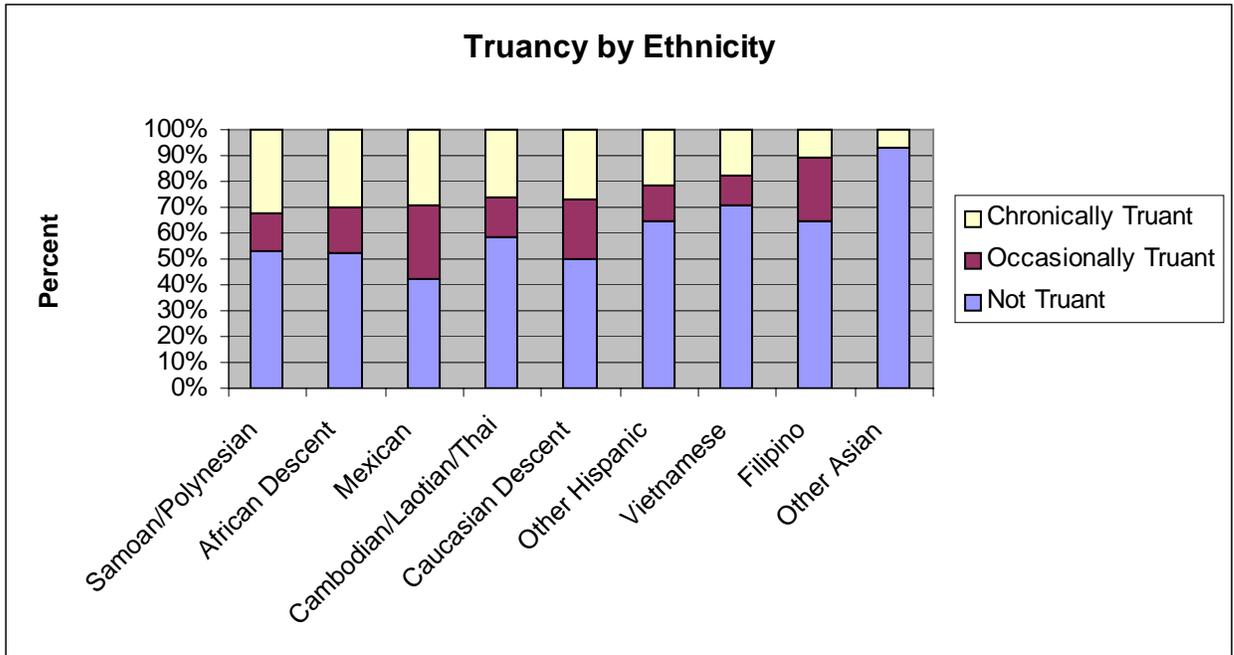
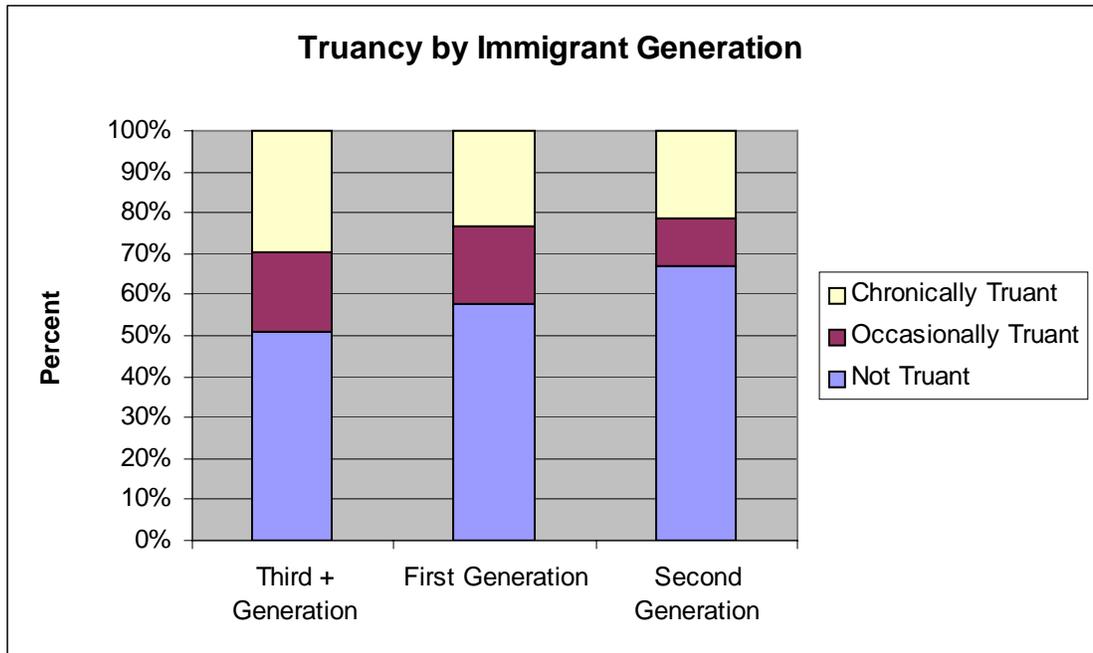


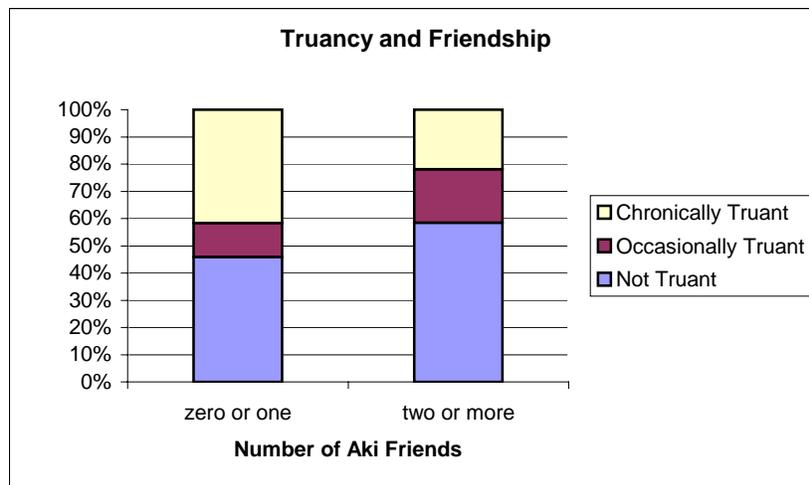
Exhibit 8 Truancy by Immigrant Generation



AKMSA enrolls a large number of students whose families have recently immigrated to the United States. The question of whether truancy is associated with being a recent immigrant arose during the scanning process. From the survey, the researchers found that second generation immigrants had better attendance records than first generation students, and better than third generation immigrants (Exhibit 8). Unfortunately, it is not clear why this discrepancy occurred.

Evaluators also looked at whether friendship affected truancy. From the survey, the task force found that students who reported having two or more friends at school were less likely to be truant than those with one or no friends at school. This finding reinforced a belief that positive social networks played a role in a student's desire to attend school (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9 Truancy and Friendship



Obstacles

During this phase, challenges and obstacles to the success of the project began to surface. For example, while over two-thirds of the students completed the survey, one class of 7th graders decided not to do complete it. Students were wary of the survey; they said that they did not trust it.

A larger problem also emerged with the teachers. During the scanning phase teachers expressed some concerns about the project, but by the time the results of the analysis were completed, they expressed even more opposition. Basically, they did not want to hear the results of the analysis. Instead the project team decided to simply place the report in each of the teachers' mailboxes.

Response Phase

The response phase began at the end of the 2000-01 school year and lasted through the end of the following school year. The stakeholders discussed the findings from the survey, police information, and focus group results and came up with a number of

approaches to respond to the truancy problem. These approaches included school wide information dissemination and individual-level solutions.

School-Wide Responses

Letters to Parents. Prior to the start of the school year, the group decided to send letters to all parents about truancy. Many parents were unaware of the state laws governing unexcused absences and this letter would explain the rules and regulations that guide the truancy policy in the Seattle School District.

At the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year, the TRI-SAPP coordinator and the Aki Kurose Truancy Specialist sent letters. The aim of this intervention was to alert all parents to the potentially serious consequences of absenteeism.

Using Crime Data. One of the concerns of the principal, teachers and parents was that students walked to school if they lived within a two-mile radius of Aki Kurose. This was the policy of the school district. The principal and teachers felt that some students were truant because they felt threatened walking to and from school.

South Precinct Crime Analysts worked to collect crime data for the area around AKMSA. The crime analysts examined calls for service data to show that the area around AKMSA had more calls than those around comparable middle schools. It was hoped that these data would convince School District administrators to reduce the radius of busing for AKMSA and thereby reduce truancy among students who feel threatened walking to school. Data also showed that certain crimes occurred more often in this area during school hours, showing a possible link between truant behavior and crime

Ripple Effects Software. In the summer of 2001, the TRI-SAPP project purchased Ripple Effects “Relate for Teens” software for AKMSA. Relate for Teens is a life skills training program based on research and proven best practices in prevention. Counselors, teachers, the truancy specialist and the school nurse were given access to this program. TRI-SAPP Program Managers believed that some difficult social issues such as drugs, sex, and violence could not be easily discussed with adults. Relate for Teens allowed students to explore social themes on their own.

Individual-Level Responses

Home Visits. To encourage students to attend school and alert them to the ramifications of their actions, one of the ideas of the stakeholders was to have SPD School Resource Officers and the school truancy specialist visit the homes of students who have five or more unexcused absences. In visiting their homes, the team would deliver a letter informing the students and parents of the consequences of further truancy. Stakeholders hoped that a personal visit from law enforcement officers would have a positive effect on attendance. While not all students could be visited, stakeholders believed that visits to some homes would have a deterrent effect on others.

Because the truancy specialist maintained a database of those students who were truant, it was believed that names and addresses of students could be provided to the police. The home visits would occur as a last resort -- when the truancy specialist was unable to contact parents to notify them of truancy problems. Police would go to the home with the truancy specialist in the morning, wake up the student (if necessary) and bring him/her to school.

Tutoring Program. The principal at Aki Kurose believed that simply bringing truant students to school would not solve the problem. Because students had missed more than five days of school, they would be behind in their studies, lose self-esteem, and create an atmosphere of failure. Furthermore, some of the truants were also disruptive in school and often required close attention by the teacher. This would lead to an environment in the classroom that was not conducive to learning for the rest of the class.

The local evaluator suggested the initiation of a tutoring program to improve control and increase a positive atmosphere in class. As a graduate student in the Sociology Department at the University of Washington he believed that undergraduate students could assist the school. Through his contacts in the Sociology Department he was able to start the program and insure that college credits were available to participants.

The local evaluator worked with the coordinator of the YMCA's school-based program to oversee the tutors and place them in classrooms. In the Winter quarter of 2001 seven tutors began the program at Aki Kurose. Initially, the YMCA coordinator assigned tutors to students who were the 'worst' truants and asked the tutors to work with them in class. But tutors and the coordinator realized that the truant students were not showing up to school. In addition, teachers were not sure what to do with the tutors, as there was no formal understanding of the tutors' roles. Some teachers made use of the tutors by having them help with groups of students; other teachers ignored them; while still others had the tutors cleaning up their classrooms.

After two quarters of working out difficulties the YMCA coordinator began working with teachers who wanted the tutors. This strategy gave the teacher a choice and the opportunity to use one or two tutors during the school week. Second, the coordinator learned to make tutors more accountable for what they do by making them maintain journals or logs. Each time they came to school the tutors wrote up a brief synopsis of what they did, who they worked with, and their impressions. This process assisted the YMCA coordinator by providing knowledge about what the tutors were doing in the school.

In general, according to the YMCA coordinator, the students who are assigned a tutor are "way behind" in terms of classroom learning. This occurs because they have missed class or are inattentive. Other students are disruptive in class and need one-on-one help. By having a tutor work with the disruptive child, the teacher can pay more attention to everyone else and not have to be interrupted constantly. Teachers recognized the advantage of having tutors in their classes and some regularly use them.

During the response phase, 63 tutors participated in the program, putting in over 30 hours per quarter or about 2,000 hours. The number of students who were tutored was difficult to quantify because of the different ways that teachers would make use of the tutors. For example, one teacher might assign a tutor to work with three students who were behind in their assignments, while another teacher might use the tutor to give assistance to all students who needed help within the classroom. This would also vary by the type of class (usually math or English) or the grade level of the students.

Overall, the YMCA coordinator thought that “the kids and tutors have had great experiences.” She says that the tutors have an effect on truant students as well as others. Teachers ‘love’ the tutors, though some teachers are ‘more proficient than others in using tutors.’ A math teacher, for example, is great and gets the best reviews from the tutors. He wants to have tutors in every math class because they help a lot. The coordinator sees the benefits of the tutor program daily. She says that “some kids show up to school on the days their tutor is scheduled to appear, even though they may be truant on other days.” She also sees that there has been a reduction in disruptions in some classes. The tutors note these types of comments in their logs.

We also interviewed tutors to gain their perspective on the program. One student said that she tutored three days per week for about one hour each day. She assisted three girls in the 8th grade pre-Algebra class. The girls varied in their abilities – “one girl was bright, animated, and got the answers right most of the time. A second girl was very quiet, but willing to do the work, while the third girl got discouraged easily, didn’t pay attention, and in some respects, didn’t participate at all.” In addition to assistance with math, the tutor mentioned that the students asked questions about college and her life.

Another tutor assisted teachers in science and reading. In the reading class on Mondays, he worked with 2-5 students for about two hours. One girl was not motivated at all – she was able to read, but unwilling to participate. He thought she was trying to act “cool”, but also noticed that she had a spelling problem and was self-conscious about it. In the science class he worked with all of the kids, but this was a ‘chaotic’ situation because the regular teacher was out sick. The tutor mentioned that substitute teachers came in, but could not handle many of the students.

Overall both tutors indicated that they had positive experiences with the program. Both students said that they were now considering teaching as profession. In addition, other UW students noted that they were interested in becoming teachers and were pursuing degrees in education. At least eight of the 17 tutors who participated in the spring 2002 semester indicated that they would pursue teaching degrees.

With the assistance of UW, the YMCA, and the principal at Aki, it appears that the program will be institutionalized. Because of the success of the program, the YMCA has expanded tutoring to two other middle schools. The University of Washington has made tutoring a formal class rather than an “independent study” course. The class is now listed as Sociology 401, Special Topics – Tutoring in the Public Schools for 5 credits. The course includes at least two days of two-hour tutoring and classroom time to learn about

sociological issues and how to deal with students. A syllabus and goals of the class have also been developed and the class is cross-listed with other departments. A graduate student will teach this course each quarter. UW hopes to teach up to three sections of 25 students each per quarter.

Obstacles During the Response Phase

Stakeholders ran into difficulties in implementing the home visit component of the strategy. While the truancy specialist and principal originally agreed to participate, lists of students were not provided to the police, nor would the specialist go to the homes of truants with them.

Section IV. Assessment and Impact

The role of 21st Century Solutions, Inc. was to determine the actual impact of the project. In this section we present the findings of the analysis of data provided by the Seattle School District and SPD. We asked: What is the impact of the school-based partnership? What were the effects of the school-based partnership project on the police, school, and participants? What were the effects on calls for service, complaints, in-school disciplinary actions, and other indicators? What are the perceptions of the participants (through interviews or surveys) toward the overall project? What changes over time occurred?

Findings: Student Contacts with the Police

Did student contact with police change over time? Were there fewer crime related incidents involving Aki students as a result of the emphasis on truancy?

The data reported in this section describe numbers of events involving students as recorded in police reports by the Seattle Police Department. These are calls for service that resulted in a police report and therefore will represent higher rates of reporting than other types of official data. The data include all written police reports for the sample population from AKMSA during the time period between January 2000 and June 2002.

Overall, we found that police contacts with Aki Kurose students was high, with trends that generally increased during the 30-month observation period. There were 116 arrests, 160 victimization events, 126 identified suspects, 87 missing juveniles, and a total of 520 events with recorded contact between Seattle police and this population of 660 middle school students.

Discussion of Descriptive Findings

The data in Exhibits 10-12 are counts of the 10 most common types of crime reported for victimization, arrests, and arrests/suspects. Therefore these lists do not include rarely reported crimes like arson, or drug possession. The purpose of these Exhibits is to draw attention to the particular crimes that involve students most often and compare the types that they most frequently commit to those they are most frequently the victims of. Significant as well are those that are rarely reported. There were only 2 drug possession events reported for this population, surprisingly low given expectations of school staff.

(In our interviews with school administrators they said that many kids smoke ‘weed’; and an interview with a tutor revealed that there were signals of drug dealing interactions during lunch in the cafeteria). The lack of police records may be a product of the pattern of enforcement—police respond to disruptive crimes with aggrieved victims.

Exhibit 10 reports the 10 most common crimes that AKMSA students were victims of during the observation period. Anecdotal evidence from interviews with school officials suggested that non-aggravated assault would account for a large proportion of student criminal involvement, and these data are consistent with that, although domestic violence may be more prevalent than school officials expect. In general these data suggest that this population is subject to more violent crime than property crime. Specifically, there are 3.7 violent crimes committed against this population for every 1 property crime. This ratio is based on a coding scheme that defined violent crimes as assault, domestic violence, threats, sexual offence, harass, and robbery. Property crimes included theft, theft-shoplift, auto theft, robbery other, burglary, and property damage. Robbery was coded as both property and violent because it often includes elements of both. Drug crimes (VUCSA), suspicious persons, warrants, and disturbances were coded as other because their relation to property or violent issues could not be established with certainty.

Exhibit 10 Victimization Events of Aki Students (2000-02)

Victimization Events				
			Property	Violent
1	ASSAULT-NONAGGRAVATED	45	-	45
2	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	18	-	18
3	ROBBERY OTHER	17	17	17
4	SUSP	15	-	-
5	ASSAULT-AGGRAVATED	14	-	14
6	THREATS	10	-	10
7	THEFT	10	10	-
8	SEXUAL OFFENSE OTHER	7	-	7
9	DISTURBANCE	3	-	-
10	PROPERTY DAMAGE	3	3	-
	total	142	30	111

Exhibit 11 shows the top 10 crimes that students at Aki Kurose were arrested for during the observation period. Consistent with expectations, this population primarily shoplifts, steal cars, and get in fights. There were 93 arrests, 55 of which were coded as property and 38 were coded as violent. These data show that for every three property crimes committed by this population this population committed two violent crimes.

Exhibit 11 Arrests of Aki Students (2000-02)

Arrests			Property	Violent
1	THEFT-SHOPLIFT	19	19	-
2	AUTO THEFT	17	17	-
3	ASSAULT-NONAGGRAVATED	15	-	15
4	ROBBERY OTHER	11	11	11
5	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	6	-	6
6	HARASS	5	-	6
7	WARRANT	5	-	-
8	VUCSA	5	-	-
9	BURGLARY	4	4	-
10	PROPERTY DAMAGE	4	4	-
total		91	55	38

Exhibit 12 shows the top 10 crimes that students at Aki were arrested for or suspected of during the observation period. These data reinforce the patterns observed in the arrest data alone, although they show a greater gap between property and violent offences. These data suggest that this population is about twice as likely to commit property crimes as violent crimes. *Taken together the data presented in the three charts suggest that for this population, victimization is far more likely to be violent, while perpetration is more likely to be property related.*

Exhibit 12 Arrests or Suspects among Aki Students (2000-02)

Arrests, suspect possible, and suspect verified combined.			Property	Violent
1	ASSAULT-NONAGGRAVATED	34	-	34
2	THEFT-SHOPLIFT	28	28	-
3	AUTO THEFT	28	28	-
4	ROBBERY OTHER	16	16	16
5	THEFT	16	16	-
6	PROPERTY DAMAGE	14	14	-
7	DISTURBANCE	13	-	-
8	BURGLARY	11	11	-
9	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	9	-	9
10	HARASS	8	-	-
total		177	113	59

Exhibits 13 and 14 present the number of police contacts by type of relationship, by each of the seven reported time periods. The time periods were selected to correspond to the school semesters and summer periods. Fall is defined as September through January 31, spring is February through June 24, and summer is June 25 through August 31. The following four exhibits show types of contact as reported by police records, including the categories of arrest, victim, suspect possible and suspect verified (combined), missing juvenile, and all contacts. All contacts include the four reported categories as well as complaint, accident, and other which were not presented separately due to their small numbers and lack of clear relevance to delinquency issues.

The clearest trend in Exhibit 13 is that the number of events varies greatly from one time period to another. Although the pattern is erratic it represents a slight upward trend which is what we would expect as an adolescent population ages. However, because the summer period lasts less than half as long as the fall and spring periods, the raw numbers distort the actual pattern. Rates of events are presented in Exhibit 5 and provide a more accurate perspective on how contact with police has changed across time for this population.

Exhibit 13 Police Contacts by Type

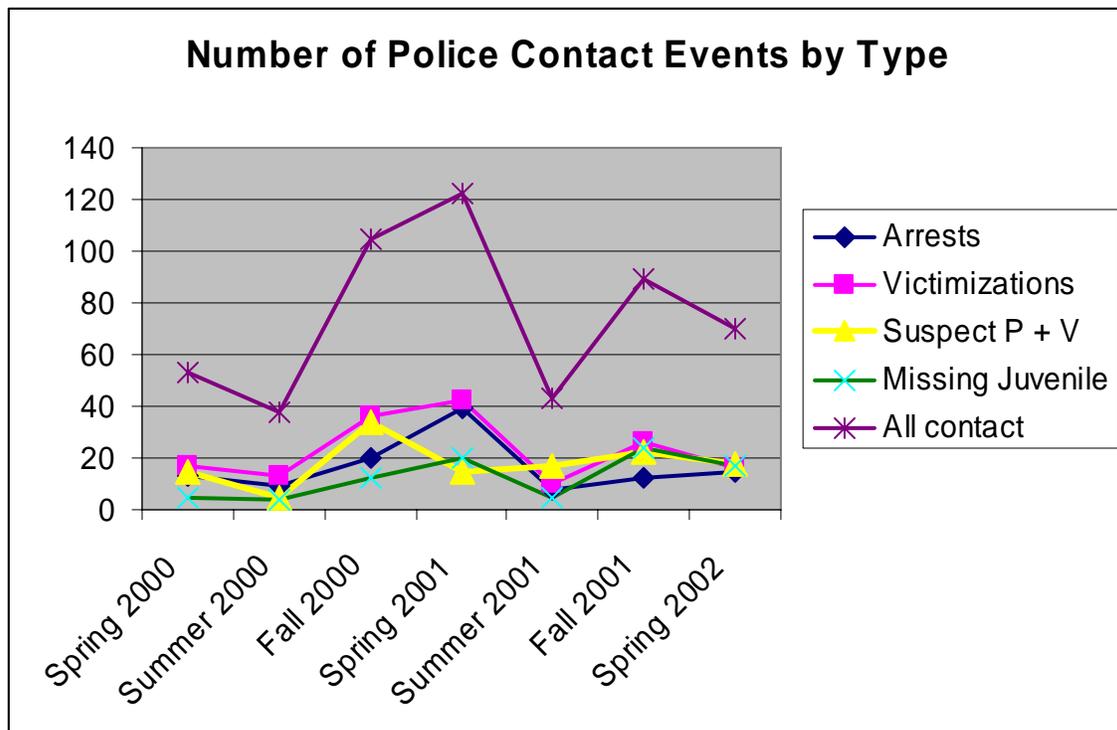


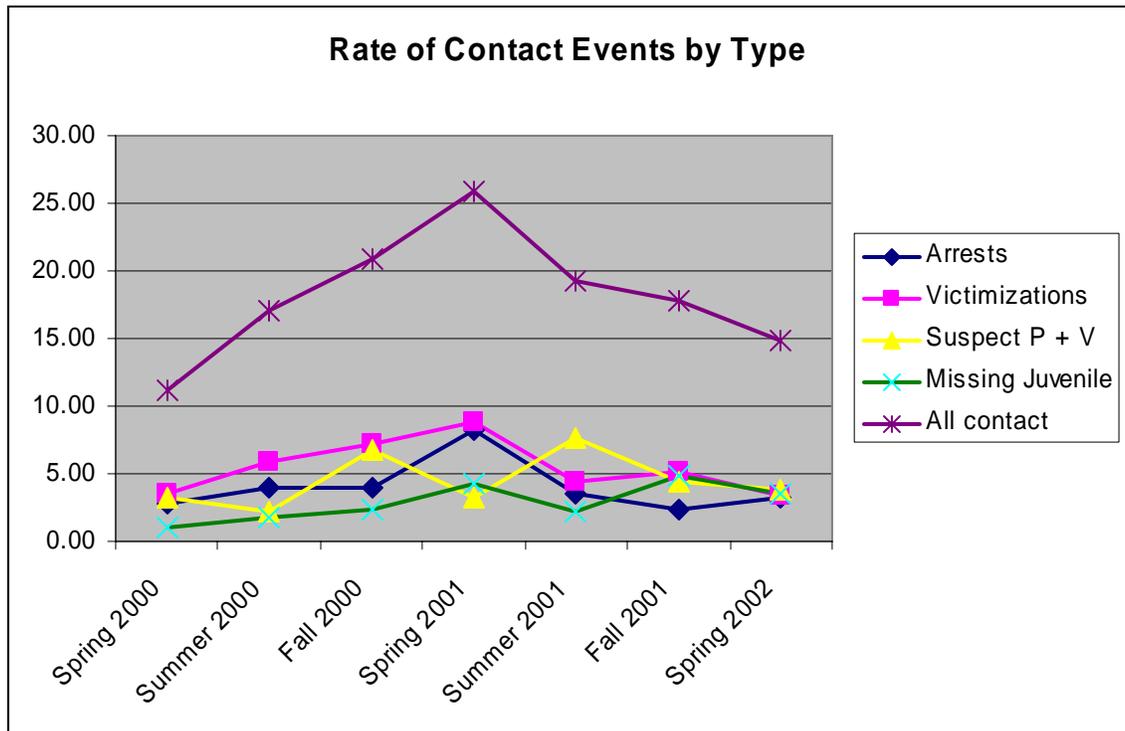
Exhibit 14 Police Contacts by Type

	Arrests	Victimization events	Suspect Possible and Verified	Missing Juvenile	All contact
Spring 2000	13	17	15	5	53
Summer 2000	9	13	5	4	38
Fall 2000	20	36	34	12	105
Spring 2001	39	42	15	20	122
Summer 2001	8	10	17	5	43
Fall 2001	12	26	22	24	89
Spring 2002	15	16	18	17	70
Total	116	160	126	87	520

Exhibits 15 and 16 show a surprisingly non-linear relationship between offending and time. The most well documented trend in criminology is the relationship between life course and delinquency. Across different populations and societies rates of delinquency have been found to increase with age from adolescence peaking in the 20's and declining through the remainder of the life course. A rough empirical expectation is that interactions with police should be increasing as this population ages. Although these data show a general upward trend (from 11 events/month to almost 15) they also show an

Exhibit 15 Rate of Contacts by Type

Note: Monthly rates are based on 30.5 day months. Lengths of time periods were defined as Fall = Sept-Jan, 153 days; Spring = Feb-June 24, 144 days; Summer = June 25-August, 68 days.



unexpected peak of 25 events per month during spring semester of 2001, and then a sharp decline back down to 15 in 2002. We can only speculate on what accounts for this trend. One explanation is that the peak may be an artifact of changes in enforcement tactics. The trends in the arrest and suspect categories offer some support for this explanation because between fall 2000 and spring 2001 a sharp rise in arrests (3.9 to 8.2) is offset by a similar sized drop (6.7 to 3.1) in taking of suspects without arrest. Both rates return to close to their 2000 rates in summer of 2001. The instability of the rates combined with the fact that the difference between taking a suspect and making an arrest often falls within the discretion of the arresting officer suggests that part of the peak is due to

Exhibit 16 Rate of Contacts by Type

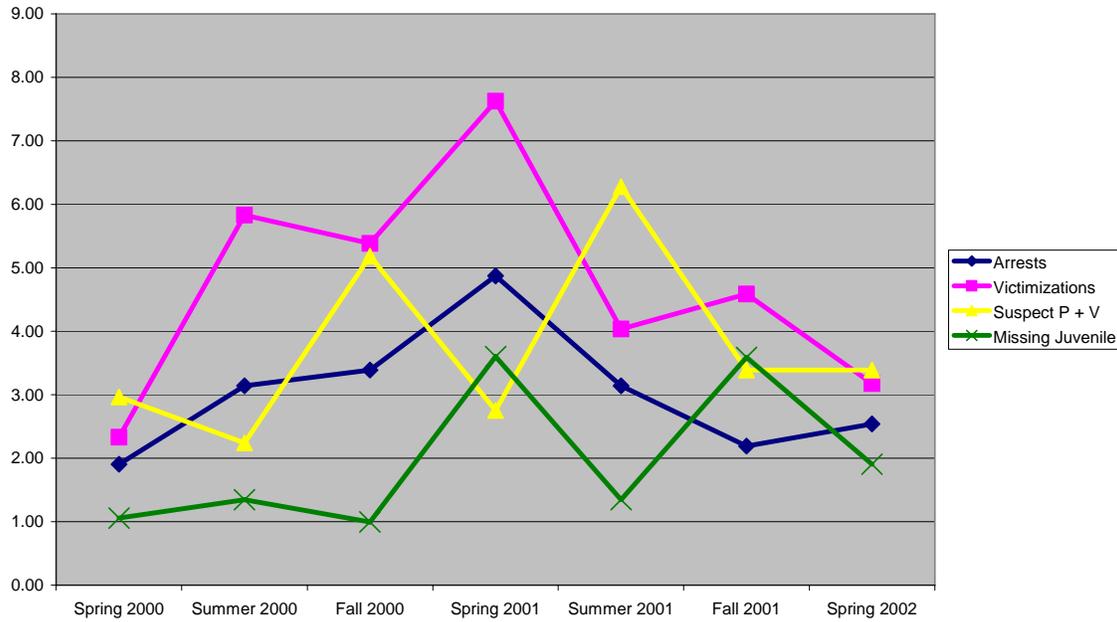
	Arrests	Victimizations	Suspect P + V	Missing Juvenile	All contact
Spring 2000	2.75	3.60	3.18	1.06	11.23
Summer 2000	4.04	5.83	2.24	1.79	17.04
Fall 2000	3.99	7.18	6.78	2.39	20.93
Spring 2001	8.26	8.90	3.18	4.24	25.84
Summer 2001	3.59	4.49	7.63	2.24	19.29
Fall 2001	2.39	5.18	4.39	4.78	17.74
Spring 2002	3.18	3.39	3.81	3.60	14.83
Average	4.03	5.51	4.46	2.87	18.13

changes in enforcement. Two other explanations warrant mentioning. First, the peak may represent a real change in behavior due to the social sanctions exerted by the police, school or other influences. Second, what appears to be a trend for a population may result from changes in behavior of a few students with high police involvement. Exhibits 21 and 22 present comparisons of the numbers of events to the numbers of students involved in events. Part of the increase in arrests observed from fall 2000 to spring of 2001 results from more repeat events during the spring, and part of the drop in suspects during the same time is related to a higher rate of repeat events during the fall. The shaded sections of both exhibits highlight these time periods.

Exhibits 17-20 show the same temporal trends as Exhibits 13-16 but are based on individuals rather than events. The rate at which students from this population were involved with the police increased slightly across the time period, with similar peaks as the event data reported in Exhibits 13-16. For instance, during the spring of 2000 within this population, on average one student was reported missing every month, and by the end of the observation period the rate had doubled. During spring 2001, three different students were reported missing from home every month. The peak was more exaggerated for the other types of contact.

Exhibit 17 Rate of Contacts by Type and Time

**Rate of student contact with police
by type, by time period**



Note: Monthly rates are based on 30.5 day months.

Exhibit 18 Data for rate trends

	Arrests	Victimizations	Suspect P + V	Missing Juvenile
Spring 2000	1.91	2.33	2.97	1.06
Summer 2000	3.14	5.83	2.24	1.35
Fall 2000	3.39	5.38	5.18	1.00
Spring 2001	4.87	7.63	2.75	3.60
Summer 2001	3.14	4.04	6.28	1.35
Fall 2001	2.19	4.58	3.39	3.59
Spring 2002	2.54	3.18	3.39	1.91
Average	3.03	4.71	3.74	1.98

Exhibit 19 Number of students

**Number of students contacted by police
by contact type, by time period**

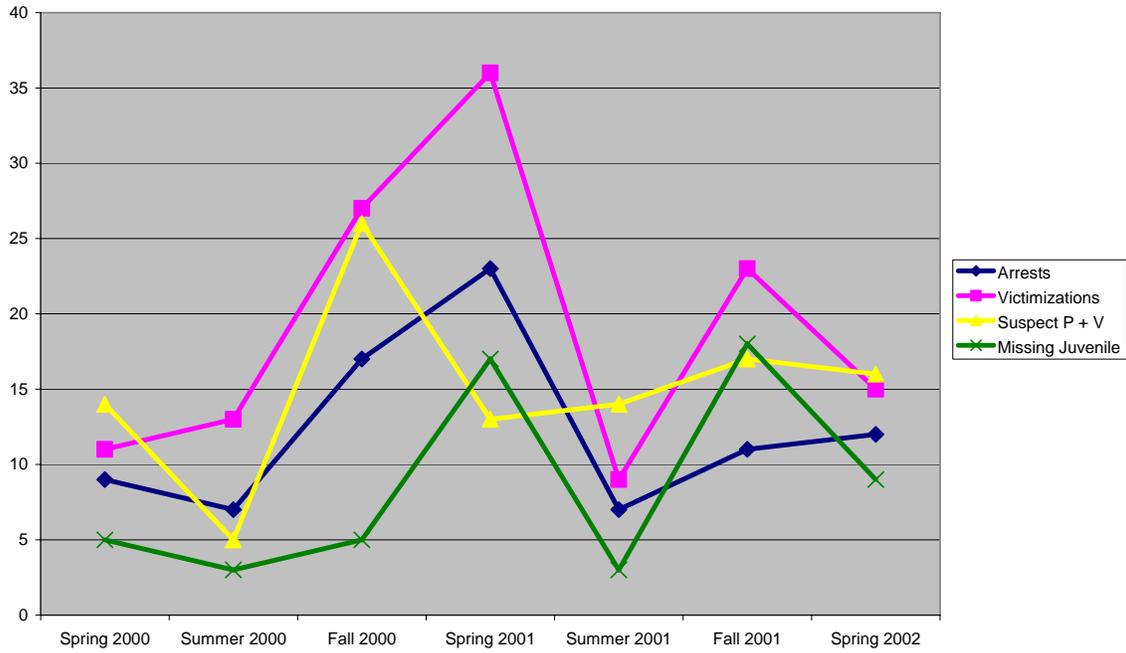


Exhibit 20 Number of Student Contacts with Police

	Arrests	Victimizations	Suspect P + V	Missing Juvenile
Spring 2000	9	11	14	5
Summer 2000	7	13	5	3
Fall 2000	17	27	26	5
Spring 2001	23	36	13	17
Summer 2001	7	9	14	3
Fall 2001	11	23	17	18
Spring 2002	12	15	16	9
Total	86	134	105	60

Exhibit 21 Numbers of individuals compared to numbers of events

	Arrests		Victimizations	
	Individuals	Events	Individuals	Events
Spring 2000	9	13	11	17
Summer 2000	7	9	13	13
Fall 2000	17	20	27	36
Spring 2001	23	39	36	42
Summer 2001	7	8	9	10
Fall 2001	11	12	23	26
Spring 2002	12	15	15	16
Total	86	116	134	160

Exhibit 22 Number of Suspects and Missing Juveniles

	Suspects		Missing juveniles	
	Individuals	Events	Individuals	Events
Spring 2000	14	15	5	5
Summer 2000	5	5	3	4
Fall 2000	26	34	5	12
Spring 2001	13	15	17	20
Summer 2001	14	17	3	5
Fall 2001	17	22	18	24
Spring 2002	16	18	9	17
Total	105	126	60	87

Regression Analysis

Using data from the police contact information described above and from the Seattle School District, we sought to determine the effects of the problem-solving project on truancy in Aki Kurose. Among the numerous findings that follow, we determined that truancy declined during the intervention period and that delinquency is linked to the highest truants – those with 30 or more unexcused absences per year.

Exhibit R1 reports descriptive statistics for the dependent (number of unexcused absences) and independent variables used in regression analysis. These data show two important trends. First, the demographic variables remain nearly the same across the two years. That is, our two samples of students in Aki are almost identical over the two year period -- the percentages of ethnic categories remain almost exactly the same, as well as grade, age, and gender. There is similar stability in GPA and prior disciplinary record. More importantly, however, the measures of attendance show large (larger than anticipated) improvements.

The descriptive statistics from Exhibit R1 show a *significant* decline in truancy during the intervention period. Mean truancy drops from 9.18 days during the 2000-01 school year to 4.44 days during the 2001-02 school year. The standard deviations drop as well, which suggests that attendance patterns are spread across a smaller range of values, which means that there are *fewer* high-level truants (those with more than 30 unexcused absences).

The largest change in percentages occurs in the group of students who had 10 or more unexcused absences. During the 2000-01 school year, 30% of the students at Aki missed (unexcused) 10 or more days of school, while during the intervention period this rate dropped to 23%. The rate of students missing 20 or more days dropped from 11% to 7%, and 30 or more days dropped from 6% to 4%. All of these measured changes are very likely to be the result of real behavior change (rather than sampling error). Thus the changes are *statistically significant* except for the group of students who missed 30 or more days of school. In other words, for those students who missed 10 or more days of school and the students who missed 20 or more days the decline in truancy is significant.

The degree of change is surprising given that our school wide intervention (the letters that were sent to home) was a weak form of control, and the directed intervention (tutoring) could not have directly impacted enough students to account for these changes. Even if we accept the idea that the presence of tutors in a class can benefit students beyond those they interact with directly (enhances order, facilitates teachers actions, etc.) the observed changes seem too large to be due to our efforts alone. The conservative interpretation of these findings is that our interventions may account for part of these changes, although other changes at the school (presence of the truancy specialist, after school activities, in-school programs like Gear Up) may account for some of the drop in truancy as well.

Exhibit R1. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables used in the analysis.

Variable	Case Study Year 1 N = 513		Case Study Year 2 N =520		Change in Mean
	Mean	(S.D.)	Mean	(S.D.)	
<i>Ethnicity variables</i>					
European American ⁴	.11	(.31)	.10	(.30)	-0.01
African American	.46	(.49)	.46	(.49)	0
Hispanic American	.09	(.29)	.09	(.29)	0
Asian American	.30	(.46)	.32	(.46)	0.02
Native American	.01	(.11)	.01	(.10)	0
<i>Age and Demographic Variables</i>					
Grade in school	6.94	(.82)	6.90	(.82)	-0.04
Age February 01	12.49	(1.00)	12.51	(.95)	0.02
Gender (M=1)	.49	(.50)	.52	(.49)	0.03
Free or reduced lunch	1.32	(.88)	NA	NA	NA
<i>Prior Behavioral Variables</i>					
GPA 1st semester 00-01	2.59	(.89)	2.61	(.84)	0.02
Discipline record before 00-01; 01-02	.32	(.47)	.33	(.47)	0.01
Arrest or suspect prior to 00-01; 01-02	.03	(.19)	NA	NA	NA
Number of prior unexcused absences 99-00; 00-01	4.99	(9.83)	7.77	(10.97)	2.78***
<i>Outcome Variables</i>					
Number of unexcused absences 00-01 10 or more days unexcused	9.18	(12.91)	4.44	(7.54)	-4.74***
20 or more days unexcused	.30	(.46)	.23	(.42)	-0.07***
30 or more days unexcused	.11	(.31)	.07	(.25)	-0.04**
	.06	(.24)	.04	(.20)	-0.02

Note: Descriptive statistics are truncated at two decimal places, standard deviations in parentheses. *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

Exhibit R2

Given the findings from our descriptive data, we wanted to know what predicts the number of days of truancy. In this exhibit we show three models, A, B, and C, for predicting the number of days truant for students at Aki Kurose.

Model A shows the relative impact of different variables when we do not control for prior truancy. It shows that *ethnicity does not play* a strong role in truancy, while *age, grade point average (GPA) and discipline record* have the strongest effects on truancy. The ethnicity finding requires further clarification. The regression coefficients for the four reported ethnic categories (African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American) indicate the number of days that members of these categories are predicted to differ from the omitted

⁴ Omitted category in regression analysis.

category, European Americans. These regression coefficients suggest that there are not strong systematic differences between these broadly defined categories. However, Exhibit 7 indicates that there are clear differences between Samoans and other Asian groups, and it is likely that there are important differences between different ethnic groups, but these differences cut across the broad categories reported here.

The unstandardized regression coefficients (B) report measures of association between the independent variable and the number of days truant per year. Unstandardized regression coefficients allow us to make straightforward interpretations of change in days truant for each unit change in the independent variable. That is, a one unit change in age is associated with an increase in 2.78 days missed. So, on average a 13-year old student will miss almost three more days of school than a 12-year old student. Similarly, for binary variables (coded 0 or 1) like gender, the coefficient indicates the difference between two groups.

From this analysis, a female student is associated with missing 3.6 more days of school than a male student. This finding is surprising given that previous assumptions indicate that boys are more likely to be truant than girls.

A Native American student is associated with missing 6.3 more days than a Caucasian student (although this effect is not quite significant at the .05 level). It appears that once we control for prior truancy, being Native American is associated with a more steeply accelerating truancy behavior. This finding is not as surprising given that Native Americans across the school district have a higher percentage of unexcused absences than other ethnic or racial groups.

Students who have a disciplinary action on their record tend to miss 6.8 days more than students who do not. This finding corresponds to the notion that truant students are more disruptive in class, less likely to do homework and school work, and thus are more likely to be disciplined and truant than other students.

Students who are young for their grade are less truant. This finding becomes apparent as we compare the Beta coefficients for grade and age. We see that, as expected, students become more truant as they grow older. But if we control for age,

Exhibit R2. Linear regression models predicting number of days truant, Case Study 1.

Variable	Model A				Model B				Model C			
	B	SE	Beta	Sig.	B	SE	Beta	Sig.	B	SE	Beta	Sig.
<i>Model A</i>												
(Constant)	1.97	6.83		0.773	6.73	5.89		.254	5.57	5.79		0.337
African American	-0.25	1.65	-0.01	0.878	-0.29	1.42	-0.01	.839	-0.77	1.41	-0.03	0.583
Hispanic American	1.67	2.20	0.04	0.447	0.49	1.89	0.01	.794	-0.10	1.89	0.00	0.957
Asian American	3.06	1.73	0.11	0.078	1.06	1.50	0.04	.478	0.96	1.48	0.03	0.516
Native American	6.35	4.53	0.06	0.161	10.06	3.91	0.09*	.010	8.59	3.83	0.08*	0.025
Grade in school	-2.43	1.04	-0.16*	0.020	-2.24	0.90	-0.14*	.013	-2.06	0.88	-0.13*	0.019
Age February 01	2.78	0.86	0.22**	0.001	1.78	0.74	0.14*	.017	1.65	0.72	0.13*	0.023
Gender	-3.67	1.02	-0.14***	0.000	-1.75	0.89	-0.07	.049	-1.77	0.87	-0.07*	0.042
GPA 1 st Semester 00-01	-4.73	0.61	-0.33***	0.000	-2.96	0.54	-0.21***	.000	-2.67	0.54	-0.19***	0.000
Discipline record before 00-01	6.87	1.19	0.25***	0.000	1.58	1.10	0.06	.152	0.80	1.08	0.03	0.456
Number of unexcused absences 99-00					0.69	0.05	0.52***	.000	0.67	0.05	0.51***	0.000
Arrest or suspect immediately prior to 00-01									11.43	2.23	0.17***	0.000
Free or Reduced lunch									0.79	0.49	0.05	0.111
Adjusted R Square			.241				.437				.466	

Note: Model A includes demographics, grades, and discipline records. Model B adds a control for previous truancy to model A. Model C adds regressors for the effects of prior arrests and SES to model B.

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

each additional year of school reduces truancy. While these findings appear contradictory, there are likely explanations. First some high truants may have dropped out by grade 8. Second, some students may be older than those in their grade because they were not promoted to a grade level at an earlier age. Third, students who started school earlier than others (at age 5 instead of age 6) may be more advanced in their learning abilities, stay in school, and are less truant.

Model B shows several changes in the impact of other variables once we control for prior truancy. Essentially, this model indicates that specific variables explain variation within groups of students if we sort them by how many days they missed school in the prior year. The effect of the student's discipline record is greatly diminished under this model, and although the strength of the GPA coefficient drops from -.33 to -.21 it remains the strongest explanatory variable. The most commonly cited disciplinary actions relate to truancy, therefore it is not surprising that controlling for truancy largely eliminates the association between truancy and having a disciplinary record.

Model C introduces the student's contact with police (arrest, victimized, or suspect) and socio-economic status or SES. The SES variable has three coding levels, 2 = free lunch, 1 = reduced lunch, 0 = no assistance. We can see that when we control for the other independent variables, this measure of socio-economic status does *not* have a statistically significant effect on truancy. (This lack of effect may be due to the limited range of socio-economic status among families that send students to AKMSA. Given that parents can choose their school, it seems unlikely that many upper middle class parents would prefer that their children attend AKMSA given the low academic performance of the school compared to its peers.)

Model C indicates that students who were arrested or taken as a suspect during the period of January to August 2000 (eight months prior to the school year) missed 11.4 days more than students who had no record from that time period. This means that prior police contact is a strong indicator of much higher levels of truancy. This finding is significant, for the police and others have believed that criminal behavior and truancy are linked, but it is the first instance where we can confirm that belief.

When we compare the results of the regressions in Exhibits R2 and R3 we find that the general story is the same as the above, but the relative strength of GPA is greater. This finding shows some support for the contention that tutoring helps reduce truancy. If truancy is associated with doing poorly in school, and students who receive help on schoolwork perform better and attend more often (than they would have done without tutoring), then we should expect attendance and grades to be more strongly associated than when the intervention was not in effect.

Exhibit R3. Linear regression models predicting number of days truant, Case Study 2.

Variable	Model A				Model B				Model C			
	B	SE	Beta	Sig.	B	SE	Beta	Sig.	B	SE	Beta	Sig.
<i>Model A</i>												
(Constant)	-5.95	6.10		0.330	0.99	5.33		0.853				
African American	-0.97	1.46	-0.04	0.507	-0.41	1.27	-0.02	0.745				
Hispanic American	1.09	1.88	0.03	0.564	0.10	1.64	0.00	0.951				
Asian American	0.04	1.49	0.00	0.977	0.46	1.30	0.02	0.725				
Native American	8.71	4.15	0.08*	0.036	7.31	3.61	0.07*	0.043				
Grade in school	0.21	0.84	0.02	0.803	-1.07	0.74	-0.08	0.147				
Age February 02	2.20	0.72	0.19**	0.002	1.76	0.63	0.15**	0.005				
Gender	-3.59	0.88	-0.16***	0.000	-2.55	0.77	-0.12**	0.001				
GPA 1 st Semester 01-02	-5.30	0.56	-0.41***	0.000	-3.69	0.50	-0.29***	0.000				
Discipline record before 01-02	2.17	1.02	0.09*	0.034	-0.41	0.91	-0.02	0.654				
Number of unexcused absences 00-01					0.72	0.06	0.49***	0.000				
Arrest or suspect immediately prior to 01-02												
Free or Reduced lunch												
Adjusted R Square		.238				.423					NA	

Note: Model A includes demographics, grades, and discipline records. Model B adds a control for previous truancy to model A. Variables for model C were not available for Case Study 2.

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

Logistic Regression Models

To further examine the link between delinquency and high truancy among students at Aki Kurose, we used logistic regression. Logistic regression analyzes the effect of independent variables on the likelihood that one of two possible outcomes will occur. In this instance, the analysis measures the impact of variables like gender, age, prior contact with police, etc. on the likelihood that a student will be truant a number of days or more during a school year. We ran two separate regressions that compared the effects of the independent variables on outcomes dichotomized at 10 days, and dichotomized at 30 days. This section describes the main comparison of value from the logistic regressions. Two models are presented, Model D and Model E. Model D shows the results when the dependent variable is “moderate truancy” or students with 10 unexcused absences. Model E uses “high truancy” or students with 30 unexcused absences as the dependent

variable. Both models include the same independent variables as the regression analysis – ethnicity, grade, gender, age, GPA, discipline, SES, and police contacts.

The bottom line here is that **having contact with the police predicts high truants** but does not predict moderate truants. This speaks to the relationship between truancy and delinquency—it is not automatic, however, only high truancy appears to be related to delinquency. This means that students who have police contact (arrest, victim, or a suspect) are more likely to have more than 30 unexcused absences within a school year.

The exponentiated beta coefficients [Exp(B)] reported in the tables allow us to discuss the percentage change in the odds of being a truant. Subtracting 1 from each exponentiated coefficient and multiplying by 100 shows the percentage change in the odds of being a truant for a one unit change in each independent variable. We will focus only on those effects that were statistically significant. GPA, prior truancy, and receiving reduced or free lunch are the three significant effects reported in Model D, which predicts the odds of being a truant of 10 days or more.

A one unit change in grade point average is associated with a 51% reduction in the odds of being truant 10 days or more. The effect for missing 30 days or more is almost the same: a reduction of 53%. Every day that a student was truant during the previous year increases the odds of being truant 10 or more days by 15%. This effect adds up quickly. A student who missed 5 days last year has 75% greater odds of missing 10 or more days this year than the student with perfect attendance. The effect is weaker for the odds of missing 30 days or more: each day increases the odds by 7%.

The most important finding from this analysis is the difference in effect of prior contact with police for moderate and high level truants. The effect of police contact (being taken suspect or arrested during Jan-Aug of 2000) is not statistically significant for moderate truancy (10 or more days). However if a student had contact with police the predicted odds of being a high level truant (30 or more) increase by 464%. This suggests that early police contact is a strong predictor of truancy, but only at extremely high levels of truancy.

Our socio-economic status indicator (free or partial lunch) seems only to matter for lower levels of truancy, and does not predict high truancy. This means that students who are provided a free lunch have 104% greater odds of being moderate truants and those provided partial lunch have 52% greater odds of being moderate level truants. Given that 68 percent of the students at Aki are provided a free or partial lunch, it appears that this group is likely to be moderately truant and should be targeted for intervention as early as the 6th grade.

Since the B coefficients are un-standardized they can only be compared to variables in the same units, so we have focused mainly on comparing from one year to another for the same independent variables.

The Nagelkerke R square indicates that both models predict about 40% of the variation in the dependent variable. That is, the included independent variables can successfully predict about 40% of the outcomes.

Model D: Predicted probability of being a moderate truant (10 or more days)

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	10.740	2	.005
	Block	10.740	2	.005
	Model	180.105	12	.000

Model Summary, 10 more more unexcused

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	451.806	.296	.418

10 or more unexcused, 00-01; including SES and Police Variables

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	BLACK	-.239	.417	.327	1	.567	.788
	HISPAM	-.073	.536	.018	1	.892	.930
	ASIAN	-.220	.448	.240	1	.624	.803
	NATAM	.122	.969	.016	1	.900	1.129
	GRADE	-.309	.254	1.486	1	.223	.734
	AGE2	.117	.205	.324	1	.569	1.124
	GENDER2	-.465	.245	3.596	1	.058	.628
	GPA00011	-.725	.146	24.521	1	.000	.484
	EDISP2	.479	.285	2.831	1	.092	1.615
	UNAB9900	.148	.028	26.846	1	.000	1.159
	COMB12	.793	.611	1.685	1	.194	2.209
	LUNCHN	.424	.150	7.986	1	.005	1.529
	Constant	.579	1.635	.125	1	.723	1.784

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: COMB12, LUNCHN.

Model E: Predicted probability of being a high truant (30 or more days)

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	7.923	2	.019
	Block	7.923	2	.019
	Model	85.874	12	.000

Model Summary, 30 or more unexcused

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	153.658	.154	.413

30 or more unexcused, 00-01; SES and police contact variables included

Step		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1	BLACK	1.001	1.117	.803	1	.370	2.722
	HISPAM	.689	1.323	.271	1	.603	1.991
	ASIAN	1.589	1.165	1.862	1	.172	4.901
	NATAM	3.210	1.428	5.055	1	.025	24.776
	GRADE	-.461	.478	.928	1	.335	.631
	AGE2	.499	.383	1.704	1	.192	1.648
	GENDER2	-.139	.471	.088	1	.767	.870
	GPA00011	-.767	.278	7.639	1	.006	.464
	EDISP2	-.023	.566	.002	1	.967	.977
	UNAB9900	.075	.022	11.615	1	.001	1.078
	COMB12	1.731	.666	6.759	1	.009	5.646
	LUNCHN	.359	.329	1.190	1	.275	1.431
	Constant	-6.639	3.342	3.946	1	.047	.001

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: COMB12, LUNCHN.

Summary of Findings

During the 30-month period of the problem-solving project in Seattle, the TRI-SAPP working group, local evaluators, and national evaluators uncovered a number of findings relevant to truancy and delinquency.

During the analysis phase of the project, the student survey and data from the school district produced the following results:

- 5th graders who entered Aki Kurose increased their truancy rates by three or four times. That is, about 10 percent of 5th graders had five or more unexcused absences in elementary school. When these 5th graders entered 6th grade, their truancy rate increased to 30 or 40 percent.
- Patterns of attendance worsened as students progressed through middle school. Forty-one percent of 8th graders who were occasionally truant (5-

9 days) in the 1999-2000 school year became chronically truant (10 or more days) during the 2000-01 school year.

- Broad ethnic categories do not predict truancy in general, however in some comparisons Native American were significantly more truant than other groups.
- However, more detailed categories do have an effect on truancy. For instance, Samoan/Polynesians were much more truant than other Asian groups.
- Second generation immigrant students had better attendance than first generation or third generation immigrant students.
- Students who reported having two or more friends at school were less likely to be truant than those with one or no friends at school.

The process evaluation showed that the SPD, Aki Kurose staff, local evaluators and other stakeholders actively participated in and completed the four major steps in the SARA model. From our experience in other school-based partnership studies we have found this to be a relatively rare event.

During the assessment phase and through the impact evaluation, we discovered significant findings from our regression analyses. They included:

- Student contact with police was remarkably high. During the 30-month period, there were 116 arrests, 160 victimization events, 126 identified suspects, 87 missing juveniles and a total of 520 events between Seattle police and the 660 Aki Kurose middle school students.
- Aki students were victims of more violent crime than property crime.
- Aki students were more likely to be arrested for property crime than violent crime.
- The rate of police contact by students over the 30-month period fluctuated. That is, there was an upward trend in police contacts for the first year and then a downward trend in the following year. (This may have been due to a change in enforcement policy.)
- The descriptive statistics for the regression analysis showed that truancy dropped from a mean of 9.18 days during the 2000-01 school year to 4.44 days during the 2001-02 school year.
- The largest drop in truancy occurred in the group who had 10 to 19 unexcused absences. In 2000-01 30 percent of Aki students had 10 to 19 unexcused absences. That dropped to 23 percent in the following year.
- In predicting truancy, we found that ethnicity did not play a strong role.
- Age, grade point average, and discipline record have the strongest effects on truancy.
- One unit change in age is associated with an increase in 2.78 days missed. Put another way, a 13-year old student will miss almost three more days of school than a 12-year old student.
- A female student is associated with missing 3.6 more days of school than a male student.

- Native American students miss 6.3 more days per school than a white student.
- Students with disciplinary actions on their record tend to miss 6.8 days more than students who do not.
- Students who are young for their grade are less truant.
- Students with 30 or more unexcused absences are associated with delinquency.
- Students who were arrested or taken as a suspect from January to August 2000 missed 11.4 days more than students who had no record during that time period.
- Students having contact with the police predicts high truants, but not moderate truants.

From these results, we are able to state that the problem-solving partnership grant had an indirect effect on the reduction of truancy in Aki Kurose Middle School Academy. Given the limitations of the available data, we are unable to state unequivocally that the reduction in truancy is attributable to the tutoring, letter writing, and attention to truants by the truancy specialist. Nonetheless, we believe that these efforts contributed to the decline in truancy from 2000-01 to 2001-02.

Section V. Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations

This study of truancy in an inner city middle school produced a number of findings that are important to our understanding of the problem solving process. While the statistical findings from the study are important and serve a valuable and useful purpose, our observations and discussions of problem solving with the stakeholders are also important. In this section we briefly discuss our impressions of the implementation of the problem solving model in Seattle and provide recommendations for others to follow.

Lessons Learned

Following and using problem-oriented policing techniques to deal with truancy takes time and patience. Initially, the grant of \$150,000 to the Seattle Police Department was to fund a project coordinator, local evaluator, truancy specialist (part-time), equipment purchases, and overtime for crime analysts for one year. While the project began on time, it took over 30 months to complete. Time passed quickly, especially when working with a school. The grant encompassed over two and a half school years, which meant that in the fall semester of 2000 and 2001 some of the processes were re-initiated and discussions repeated.

Fortunately, the passage of time did not affect project staff, though the original project coordinator moved on to other opportunities and three babies were born into the families of the new coordinator and the UW evaluators.

An important lesson for future projects in Seattle is to gain legitimacy and credibility with teachers and staff prior to project onset. The grant itself was funded through the police department with some funds available to the school. Aki Kurose staff, however, were not involved in the proposal writing, selection of the problem, or with issues related to the budget. Teachers were not consulted about the nature of the project and were thus, somewhat reluctant to participate. One of their concerns was that they already knew that truancy was a major problem and needed funds to implement the programs they felt would succeed. The teachers balked at working with project staff from the police department and did not feel that it was appropriate to conduct further study of truancy. If the teachers, staff and administrators at Aki understood the roots of the problem-solving model from the beginning, they may have had a different attitude about participating.

A second issue was the non-involvement by parents and students in the problem-solving process, especially in dealing with truancy. This issue is a larger problem for inner city schools, where parental support for students is often non-existent.

A third lesson is one of involvement at all levels within the police department. Project staff did an excellent job in guiding the project and coordinating efforts, as well as in obtaining data and convening meetings. Yet, most of the work was developed and implemented by civilians working out of the Research, Grants, and Corporate Support Unit of SPD. Sworn officers and higher-ranking officials were tangentially involved rather than invested in the outcomes of the project.

This leads to lesson number four, regarding the role of the police in schools. One School Resource Officer is assigned to Aki Kurose but he splits his time with a large high school. This means that students rarely see the officer at Aki and when they do see him, he is more ‘enforcement’ oriented than school or community oriented. That is, students see him making an arrest or ‘handling’ an incident rather than talking with students about safety or prevention issues, the ramifications of truancy, or other topics that would lead to a stronger relationship with the officer. Students need to see the non-enforcement side of police work to overcome the biases inherent in their views of police.

Policy Recommendations

Early Intervention. The majority of students who are chronically truant developed problems in the sixth grade. While only 10 percent of AKMSA students could be considered chronically truant in fifth grade this figure rose to over 30% in the sixth grade. This finding suggests that interventions should begin before or at the start of sixth grade.

Since the school has access to attendance data, reaching the families of those 10 percent of students who have primary school attendance problems could make a significant difference. Holding meetings where the students’ needs are discussed prior to entering AKMSA would help create a welcoming atmosphere for those students most likely to have truancy problems. If there are issues of fear of victimization, or behavioral problems that are out of the control of parents, the relationship with SPD could be of benefit to the school.

Student Contacts with Police. A significant number of students at Aki come into contact with the police as arrestees, victims, or suspects. We found that students who fall into these categories are more likely to become highly truant. We suggest that police, school administrators, and parents work together to develop solutions to this problem.

Communication. One problem that the TRI-SAPP team repeatedly encountered was that interested parties did not communicate with each other in helping students and families succeed. Parents, teachers, administrators, police, counselors, court workers, and others should have a forum for discussing issues that affect students’ lives. In particular, better communication between the SPD, King County Superior Court, and AKMSA is needed regarding the status of truants. Institutionalizing communication between parties would reduce overlap of prevention efforts and ensure a process that treats truancy problems in a uniform way.

English as a Second Language. Because of language differences, many parents at AKMSA did not understand the complexities of dealing with attendance or sometimes even know that their children had attendance problems. All standard school communication should be available in as many languages as possible and translators should be available for meetings with teachers and administrators.