

# Summary Report

## Tennessee's SCHOOL-BASED FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS 2012-2013

prepared by the Office of School-based Support Services in the Division of Safe and Supportive Schools  
Tennessee Department of Education

### OVERVIEW

Many of Tennessee's students face obstacles, such as 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 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, which face such students, the General Assembly adopted T.C.A. § 49-2-115, Family Resource Centers 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 Family Resource Centers, however, school revenue constraints have restricted Local Education Agencies (LEAs) from developing FRCs without funding assistance. **In 2012-2013 there was \$3,050,000 allocated to award grants to administer 103 family resource centers in 78 LEAs, which served 145,267 students in 65 counties.**

Family Resource Center grant renewal is based on performance in previous years. The 2012-13 Grantees received an annual award of twenty-nine thousand six hundred eleven dollars and sixty-five cents (\$29,611.65) per center. The LEA provided a minimum match of \$20,388.35 for each family resource center.

Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues. Annually, family resource centers submit reports detailing 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 family resource center annual reports are presented throughout this summary report.

*The Family Resource Center is the most structured/unstructured program around. There are structured objectives addressed such as parenting classes, educational activities for parents and children, keeping up with the enrollment and database for the Lake County Imagination Library, treasurer for Margaret Newton Scholarship Fund, Interagency, Imagination Library and Salvation Army, etc. At the same time, the FRC is accessible at a moment's notice to any problems that might arise. Many times I have dropped what I was doing and addressed what I refer to as "the problem of the moment". I also act as a liaison between schools and parents. This works well for both the parents and the schools. Peggy Lovell, Lake County FRC*

## GOALS

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.

The goals established by each of the Family Resource Centers 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 gains noted in related outcomes.

The multitude of Family Resource Center goals can be aligned with five positive outcomes for students and families:

- \* **Children are succeeding in school;**
  - \* **Young children are ready to enter school;**
  - \* **Parents are working;**
  - \* **Children and families are safe;**
  - \* **Children and families are healthy.**
- Examples of these outcomes are identified below:**

### Children are Succeeding in School:

Educational Testing Service (ETS) research by Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley (2007) verified school attendance is a key predictor to school performance. Sixty-two (62) FRCs implemented programs to target students with poor attendance and their families. The National Assessment Governing Board's analysis of 2011 data indicates "*missing even a few days of school seems to make a difference in whether 8<sup>th</sup> graders perform at the top of their game.*"

*Dyer County FRC reported 95% improvement in attendance among students receiving case management and Henry County FRC reported 72.8% improvement in attendance. Tipton County FRCs truancy prevention program yielded 80% improvement in attendance.*

For some students the lack of school clothes and coats pose a barrier to school attendance so seventy-six (76) FRCs coordinate clothing banks. Several FRCs notes the need to provide student clothing has increased as much as twenty-two percent (22%) as a result of increased numbers of families in financial distress. *Pickett County FRC reported the overall attendance rate improved by 5% and the*

*overall increase in final grades was 4% as a result of providing adequate food and clothing. Scott County FRC provided 1190 students [39% of school system population] with clothing, shoes and coats resulting in 66% decrease in days absent.*

For students entering puberty, access to facilities and personal hygiene products is important in developing self-confidence and a direct effect on school attendance. Teachers and principals often ask Family Resource Centers to assist students who have no resources for personal hygiene items.

Fifty-three (53) family resource centers provided tutoring and mentoring programs to improve student performance. The programs have matched trained community volunteers with "at-risk" students. *The Oak Ridge FRC tutorial program reported a 98% gain in grades for participating students. The Murfreesboro City FRC tutorial program reported improved attendance rate to 96% and 75% of students improved in all academic areas. Students in the Dyer County FRC Lunch Buddies mentoring program had an 83% improvement in attendance and an 81% improvement in grades. The Lincoln County FRC partnered with the Elks Lodge for mentors and the program resulted in improved grades for 75% and improved attendance for 50%. In Bledsoe County the FRC developed the Breakfast Buddies and the Learning Lunch for tutors to work with students during their breakfast and lunch periods with many students improving to the next level in mathematics. The Blount County FRC recruited and trained 41 new tutors/mentors for a total of 350 tutors/mentors working in all levels kindergarten through high school.*

To equip parents with the skills and knowledge to be their child's most important "teacher" and to support success sixty-one (61) family resource centers provide training in parenting skills and thirty-nine (39) FRCs provide training in early childhood development. Parent involvement in their child's education is proven to have a direct relationship on student learning.

*The Chester County FRC coordinated a countywide parent involvement program: 473 parents of k-3 students were trained on how to help their children with all academics and to read to their children. 184 parents of at-risk students in 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grades were trained to enrich their skills to help their children reach basic objectives.*

Fifty-six (56) family resource centers provide case management/counseling to meet specific needs of a student and their family. *Clay County FRC reported that 98% of academically at-risk students who received services from FRC met graduation requirements in May, 2013.*

One of the highest dropout rates occurs among the population of teen parents and pregnant students. Twenty-six (26) family resource centers conduct programs for pregnant and parenting teen students to remain focused on their academic performance and help them succeed in school, as well as, providing them instructions on the responsibilities of parenting. *Teen parents who participated in the Memphis Carver FRC had a 98% graduation rate. The Henry County Teen Pregnancy program yielded 81% improvement in attendance and 71% improvement in grades. In Scott County the students who participated in the FRC pregnant teen and teen mom program had 100% attendance rate and a 100% graduation rate for seniors.*

Forty-eight (48) family resource centers work with the students by providing programs in developing self-esteem, conflict resolution, and behavioral management and work with the families by providing parenting skills training. The strategies of the Family Resource Center programs have produced increased attendance rates, reduced truancy rates, reduced dropout rates, and reduced disciplinary problems. Research-based training in parenting skills and techniques which are successful in helping destructive adolescents develop self-control and focus is provided by twenty-four (24) family resource centers.

### **Young Children Are Ready to Enter School:**

Forty-two (42) family resource centers provided some type of early childhood education program to assist families in providing their children with developmentally appropriate activities and experiences essential to development of school readiness skills. In many school systems the family resource centers partner with the pre-kindergarten classes to boost meaningful involvement of parents in the education of their children. *The Haywood County FRC provides parents with training and activity packets to develop the skills, indicated by teachers as in need of improvement, for each pre-K and kindergarten student – based on Discovery Ed results kindergarten students showed an 83% proficiency rate increased from 70% in reading and 80% proficiency rate increased from 55% in math.*

Thirty-nine (39) FRCs provide training in early childhood development and parenting guidance to support healthy physical and brain growth and to increase parental verbal interactions with their children, birth to five years of age. Twenty-one (21) centers collaborate with their communities to construct and deliver "Preschool in a Bag" on a regular basis to preschool children and their families. These are children who have no access to pre-kindergarten programs. The contents of the bags provide guidance to parents in developmentally appropriate activities and assorted supplies to encourage the children in development of school readiness skills.

### **Parents are working:**

Thirty (30) family resource centers provide coaching and training for GED (General Educational Development) for parents/guardians to improve access to job requiring a high school diploma or equivalency – resulting in improved school involvement and school performance by their children. The Oak Ridge Family Resource Center provided anecdote of such success: *Mary Jo Bruce, FRC Director, started working with the mother of an elementary student when she learned of the mother's problems with drug addiction and stability. In addition to finding treatment, assistance with food and utilities, Ms. Bruce mentored the mother to pass her GED. The mother worked hard to learn and passed the GED with a score qualifying her for HOPE scholarship enabling the mother to continue her education. The assistance of the FRC moved the family from despair to hope and the mother's children now appreciate the value of a good education.*

Thirty-one (31) family resource centers provided job skills training, access to adult education, case management, information on job availability or other services to assist those families that are failing to meet the needs of their children as a result of unemployment or under-employment. *The Alcoa Family Resource Center was called upon to assist a student's family when their home was burned -- a total loss. The FRC was able to collect local contributions to assist the family with temporary housing, clothes, gas vouchers and school supplies. The mother and grandfather were assisted in finding jobs. By March the family found a place to rent and the FRC located contributions for furniture and household items. Their child stayed focused on his studies and graduated high school.*

### **Children and Families are Safe:**

In 2012-13 forty-two (42) FRCs provided programs to combat drug and alcohol abuse. *After seeing the effects of illegal drug use on the community's families and the negative effects on the students the Mountain City FRC in Campbell County implemented a 12 step program to help those struggling with "hurts, habits and hang-ups". 85% of participants, who stay in the program, are successful in overcoming their addictions.*

Forty-seven (47) family resource centers provide assistance in locating safe housing. These services include location of affordable housing, location of temporary shelter for families that have suffered fire or storm damage. In addition, temporary assistance with utilities is provided to assure that students are not in home environments which jeopardize their health. *The Maury County Whitthorne Family Resource Center was called upon to assist a family who became homeless and was living in their car during the school year. The center provided assistance in locating housing, clothing and other items as needed. Throughout the rough times, the student maintained his studies and graduated in the top 10% of the graduating class of 300.*

Violence has a drastic effect on students' growth and development. Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs are provided by thirty-two (32) centers to address student behavioral problems. *The Bordeaux FRC in Davidson County developed and implemented the CHAMPS (Changing How All Males Perceive Success) to address behavior, academics and any other issues that hinder student success. The male students identified by the school counselor participate in this successful program semi-weekly.*

### **Children and Families are Healthy:**

Fifty-five (55) family resource centers provide linkage to physical and mental health services. Information on good health practices is provided through counseling, training and health fairs within the community; thirty-nine (39) centers sponsored health fairs for the school and community. The centers establish collaborative links with physicians, county health department offices and civic organizations to provide eye exams, glasses, dental work and other health services for children in need. *The need for access to mental health/behavioral health services was addressed by the Alcoa Family Resource Center when they partnered with school health and Cherokee Health Systems to establish in-school access to mental health services paid by student's family insurance or direct payment based on a sliding fee scale. Students no longer miss school to obtain much needed mental health assessment and services.*

*The Dandridge/Piedmont FRC in Jefferson County was asked to assist a single parent family of three children when one of the boys was called before the Truancy Review Board. The children had multiple health needs which were determined to be the root cause of the absences. The mother could not afford to take them to the doctor. The FRC collaborated with community services, helped to obtain health insurance for the children, and the much needed health services. Attendance and school performance have improved.*

Good health and proper weight are directly related to proper nutrition. Forty-one (41) centers sponsor programs to educate families on the need for proper nutrition through affordable foods. The delivery of information on good nutrition has served not only to teach families healthy eating habits on a strict budget, but nutritional learning opportunities serve as a tool to teach basic math and reading skills to under-educated parents.

Fifty-eight (58) family resource centers, located in communities with no access to food assistance, maintain food banks for families. All other family resource centers collaborate with community-based agencies providing emergency food supplies for families in need.

A growing number of family resource centers have identified the most vulnerable children who fail to receive sufficient food during the weekends and school holidays. Sixty-three (63) FRCs provide a discrete way to provide supplemental food for students and any siblings residing in their homes. Backpacks are filled with nutritious foods and the student is able to carry food home for the weekends along with textbooks. *The Henry County FRC reports a 91% improvement in attendance among those*

students participating in the backpack program. The Greene County FRC not only reported improvements in attendance, 64% of participants showed academic improvement based on TCAP scores.

## EVALUATIONS

The programs and interventions provided through the family resource centers are hard to evaluate using traditional methods: they are multi-faceted, interactive, continually evolving and reliant on the active involvement of committed individuals who contribute more than their jobs require.

The family resource centers rely on a combination of sources to determine the success rate of the programs developed and outcomes for students. The costs that would be incurred through exhaustive research tools to follow each child's progress are prohibitive. Therefore, the centers utilize the feedback from teachers and school administrators as indicative of student success. Programs developed to improve school attendance and school success rely upon classroom data. The programs developed to address adult needs are evaluated through surveys of the clientele. Those surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction and benefit to families.

## SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Tennessee's school-based family resource centers – despite limited resources - continue to assess the needs of their vulnerable students, collaborate with community organizations and to develop effective programs to remove the barriers to student success with very limited resources. Review of the summary reports for each of the 103 family resource centers reveal the centers are very aware of their respective community and changing family dynamics, such as the growing numbers of grandparents, who are raising and educating grandchildren and even great grandchildren. These changes in family dynamics have placed new demands on the family resource centers as the “grandparent” population is not knowledgeable of today's educational system with many living on fixed incomes and few accessible resources to meet the demands of growing children. Family Resource Centers throughout the state are noting this trend and are providing training and assistance in order that the grandparents can support successful education of their grandchildren.

## **GLOSSARY GUIDE TO MATRIX APPENDIX**

The definitions of the *service/activity, location, and funding categories* within the matrix are as follows:

*Alternative School Affiliation:* The FRC counsels families of students assigned to the alternative school as a result of behavior leading to suspension or expulsion from school.

*Attendance/Tuancy:* The FRC center is informed about students with excessive absence from classes. Such students and their families receive counseling and home visits.

*Case Management:* The FRC manages the combination of services for each student based on the assessed need of the student.

*Child Care:* Child care services are provided while parents are participating in programs or services. Child care providers within the community may be offered training in child development and developmentally appropriate practice.

*Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation:* The FRC provides training for students, parents, school staff and/or community on conflict resolution and peer mediation.

*Clothing Bank:* The FRC provides a clothes closet to meet the emergency needs of students and their families.

*Counseling:* The FRC provides advice and guidance to students/families and guides them in the creation of a deliberate plan of action to resolve problems/barriers.

*Directory of Services:* The FRC establishes a directory of all agencies that can provide needed services and are accessible to families. All agencies within the directory work collaboratively with the FRC and families are referred to appropriate agency based on specific need.

*Early Childhood Development:* The FRC provides developmentally appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

*Family Literacy:* The FRC provides programs to increase the literacy levels of parents to empower them to be more effective in assisting their children in literacy skills.

*Families First Affiliation:* The FRC provides components of the Welfare initiative.

*Food Bank:* The FRC provides access to food goods for families in need.

*Food Backpack:* Project designed to provide healthy, easily prepared food to the most vulnerable children who may be missing meals on a regular basis. Students are discreetly given a backpack full of food for themselves and any siblings every Friday.

*GED/Adult Basic Education:* The FRC works in tandem with the adult basic education program and/or provides additional assistance for families seeking GED or additional educational opportunities.

*Health:* The FRC provides information on good child health as well as family health; co-operates with the local Department of Health; increases public knowledge about good health practices; and assists eligible families in enrolling in TennCare.

*Health Fair:* The FRC collaborates with other departments, agencies and health organizations to present a one or two day conference with a diverse array of health and nutrition information stations and basic health check stations for communities to learn facts regarding prevention and to access basic health information.

*Home Visits:* The FRC conducts home visits to determine needs of referred families and to provide solutions to problems identified.

*Housing Assistance:* The FRC networks with other community agencies and individuals to solve housing needs for families "at-risk".

*Juvenile Court Affiliation:* The FRC works in collaboration with the respective Juvenile and Family Court serving the county. The FRC provides training for families referred by the court.

*Job Readiness/Job Training:* The FRC provides job training and job opening information to families.

*Nutrition:* The FRC provides information, and training on nutrition needs and economically meeting the nutritional needs of children.

*Parents as Teachers:* The FRC provides training in accordance with the model Parents as Teachers – training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.

*Parenting Skills:* The FRC provides training in child development, appropriate discipline, and parenting.

*Parenting and Early Childhood Development:* The FRC provides special parenting skills training focusing on children ages 0 –8 years.

*Parenting Skills for Destructive Adolescents:* The FRC provides special parenting skills training focusing on adolescents.

*Parent Lending Library:* The FRC provides a library with books, media, and resource materials that address a comprehensive span of issues focusing on children.

*Preschool in a Bag:* The FRC provides bags filled with manipulatives and game boards with instructions to parents on child directed activities that will assist children in developing skills appropriate to the 4 year old. This information is provided bimonthly to parents of preschool children that do not have the opportunity to participate in a preschool program.

*Safe and Drug Free Schools:* The FRC works in collaboration with the school and community to reduce violence and halt drug usage among children and families.

*Tutoring/Mentoring:* The FRC establishes a tutoring and/or mentoring program to assist students.

*Teen Parents Program:* The FRC provides special child development and teen parent training, increasing the graduation rates of teen parents.

*Other:* This category includes diverse programs developed to meet specific community needs, such as grief counseling, teaching hygiene, reducing head lice, etc.

The three most frequently provided service/activities of each FRC are designated by the number 1, 2, or 3. Those centers that felt that there was no significant ranking difference between the offered services/activities, did not rank the services/activities.

For additional information regarding Family Resource Centers in Tennessee, contact: Jan Bushing, School-based Support Services, Tennessee Department of Education, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Andrew Johnson Tower, 710 James Robertson Pkwy Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0376; email [Jan.Bushing@tn.gov](mailto:Jan.Bushing@tn.gov)

