

Grant Update

A Summary of Grant Activity

Governor's Crime Commission

NC Criminal Justice Analysis Center

Perquimans Success Academy

Estimates indicate that roughly 30 percent of Perquimans County children live below the poverty line.¹ With that in mind, it has been documented that economically disadvantaged youth often perform below the level of their peers in terms of academic performance.² Many recognize that poor school performance coupled with other risk factors, such as school disciplinary actions, are commonly associated with an elevated risk of future juvenile delinquency.

The Problem

Located in northeastern North Carolina, Perquimans County sees its fair share of juvenile crime and delinquency just like any other community. One of the state's smallest counties in terms of population, Perquimans has fewer than 1,900 residents between the ages of 6 and 17.³ Based on juvenile complaint rates, its prevalence of juvenile crime and delinquency is comparable to that of the state. Last year, Perquimans County had an undisciplined rate of 3.78 and delinquent rate of 27.94 (per 100,000 youth ages 6-17), while overall, the state had undisciplined and delinquent rates of 2.34 and 26.08 respectively.⁴ Of delinquent complaints in Perquimans County last year, about 80 percent were classified as minor offenses, or in other words, Class 1-3 misdemeanors. Since complaints tend to be relatively minor in nature, the county has a significant need for programming to address the needs of at-risk youth and families while also providing diversion opportunities for first-time offenders.

The Grant

Perquimans Success Academy offers afterschool program activities for at-risk youth in grades 6-12 and their families. Implemented collaboratively by Perquimans County Schools, the Perquimans Mentoring Focus Group, and the Perquimans County Sheriff's Office, the project provides Teen Court, academic intervention services, recreational activities, service learning projects, and prevention education on drugs, truancy and teen pregnancy. A portion of grant funds pay for teachers and



Above: The Teen Court meets for a hearing. Below: The Teen Court Panel of Perquimans County. At center is Perquimans County Clerk of Court Todd Tilley, who volunteers his time to assist with the Teen Court Program.



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One Way, Drug Free brought Michael Dean Chadwick to speak to students about drug addiction, important life decisions and staying focused in school. Chadwick is the father-in-law of Josh Hamilton, a professional baseball player from Raleigh, North Carolina who has struggled with drug and alcohol addiction.

assistants who provide homework assistance, a part-time coordinator who manages activities related to the Teen Court and bus drivers who provide transportation for youth participants. The academy also partners with other agencies that provide activities related to parenting skills, academic intervention, interpersonal skills building, recreational activities, and GED literacy skills for parents of youth participants.

An important element of the Academy is the Perquimans County Teen Court — believed to be the state’s only teen court based out of a local public school system. First-time offenders who are under the age of 18 years old and either reside in Perquimans County or attend a Perquimans County public school are eligible to participate in the youth court.

Eligible offenses for referral include infractions and Class 1-3 misdemeanors only; whereas DWI, other motor vehicle violations, and felonies are not eligible.

Goals and Objectives

The Perquimans program aims to improve the academic progress of youth participants while reducing delinquent and offending behaviors by:

- Decreasing referrals to suspension, alternative education placements and expulsions;
- Enhancing students’ knowledge of the negative effects of substance abuse; and
- Improving attitudes of those involved with teen court activities towards pro-social peers and strong school motivation.

To track progress on these objectives, the program has created and maintains a database to document teen court participation, academic-related data, and pre- and post-test survey results concerning the effects of provided educational activities. During the past funding cycle, each of the project’s objectives were either met or exceeded as:

- 85 percent of the youth participating in the program saw a decrease in referrals to suspension, expulsion and alternative education placement;
- 85 percent of the youth participating in the program improved their overall average grade by at least two points within eight months after admission and at least half improved scores in math and reading between the first and fourth quarters of the school year;
- 100 percent of the youth participants increased their knowledge about the negative effects of substance abuse; and
- 85 percent of teen court youth participants exhibited favorable attitudes towards pro-social peers and strong school motivation.

Activities and Accomplishments

Pearson and Jurich (2005) note that teen courts can help reduce backlogs in the juvenile justice system. This helps youthful offenders avoid having a formal record and helps participants learn to be responsible, civic-minded neighbors.⁵ The Perquimans Teen Court aims to do exactly that. During the 2011-12 school year, over 30 students and eight adults volunteered and were trained by resources that included the local district attorney, clerk of court, and the Internet. After being

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trained, volunteers conducted hearings last year for six referred students who had offenses that included drug possession, assault and larceny. To ensure the peer court operates effectively, an advisory board of school and community members has been established and meets each quarter during the school year.



Overall, youth participants of the academy have been offered several educational and charitable opportunities, along with various extracurricular activities. Youth have participated in several charitable events, such as Relay for Life, Coats for Kids, and Pennies for Patients. The State Employees Credit Union provided a financial literacy session for students. Danya Perry, director of program and youth development for Communities in Schools of North Carolina, spoke during an anti-gang workshop. Finally, a presentation was made to participants to help them understand the consequences of dropping out of school.

Sustainability Planning

A successful and sustainable grant project realizes that funding for the continuation of services must be planned ahead of implementation. Perquimans County Public Schools and its community partners have had discussions regarding future funding opportunities and will continue combining resources to ensure the project continues. The public school system will continue to support staffing and services for teen court and afterschool activities by using state 'At-Risk Student Services' funding, state 'Disadvantaged Student Supplemental' funding, federal 'Rural Low Income' funding, and federal 'Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.' Throughout the past year, presentations were made to the local Rotary Club and Interagency Council to advise these entities on the benefits of the Perquimans Success Academy.



In November 2011, the Perquimans County Middle School hosted a night of art and music for students, parents and the community.

Summary

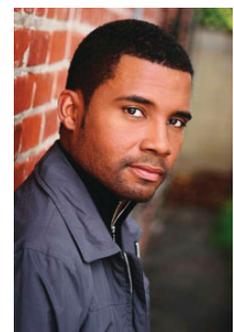
In its first year of GCC grant funding last year, the Perquimans Success Academy provided critical programming to 102 youth residents residing in one of North Carolina's least populated counties. With a second-year of GCC funding expected through June 2013, the Academy will continue to provide an opportunity for the diversion of first-time juvenile offenders to Teen Court rather than referring them to juvenile court. In addition, the Perquimans Success Academy will continue to provide delinquency prevention activities during afterschool hours and the summer. By employing both prevention and intervention methods, the program offers a balanced approach in steering at-risk youth away from future delinquency.



Writer and actor Mike Wiley performs 'One Noble Journey' for students at Hertford Grammar School and Perquimans County Middle School.

References

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- 4 <http://www.ncdjdp.org/statistics/databook.html>
- 5 Pearson, S.S. & Jurich, S., (2005). Youth Court: A Community Solution for Embracing At-Risk Youth, A National Update. *American Youth Policy Forum*. American Probation and Parole Association. Retrieved from <http://www.aypf.org/publications/Youth%20Court%20-%20A%20Community%20Solution.pdf>.



Perquimans Success Academy

GRANT SUMMARY

Area Served: Perquimans County

Implementing Agency: Perquimans County Schools

Project Director: James Bunch, Assistant Superintendent

Funding: \$94,861.72, Federal Funding (2-years)

Overview: Perquimans Success Academy provides afterschool program activities for at-risk youth, grades 6-12, and their families. Implemented collaboratively by Perquimans County Schools, the Perquimans Mentoring Focus Group, and the Perquimans County Sheriff's Office, the project provides teen court, academic intervention services, recreational activities, service learning projects, and prevention education on drugs, truancy and teen pregnancy.

- Objectives:
- To decrease participants' referrals to suspension, alternative education placements and expulsions;
 - To improve participants' school performance;
 - To enhance participants' knowledge of the negative effects of substance abuse; and
 - To improve teen court participants' attitudes towards pro-social peers and strong school motivation.

Accomplishments: Between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012:

- 85 percent of the youth participating in the program decreased their referrals to suspension, expulsion and alternative education placement.
- 85 percent of the youth participating in the program improved their overall grade point average (GPA) by two percentage points within 8 months after admission.
- 100 percent of the youth participants demonstrated knowledge of the negative effects of substance abuse.
- 85 percent of the youth participants participated in teen court activities and exhibited favorable attitudes towards pro-social peers and strong school motivation.