



Building a Restorative Truancy Prevention Program

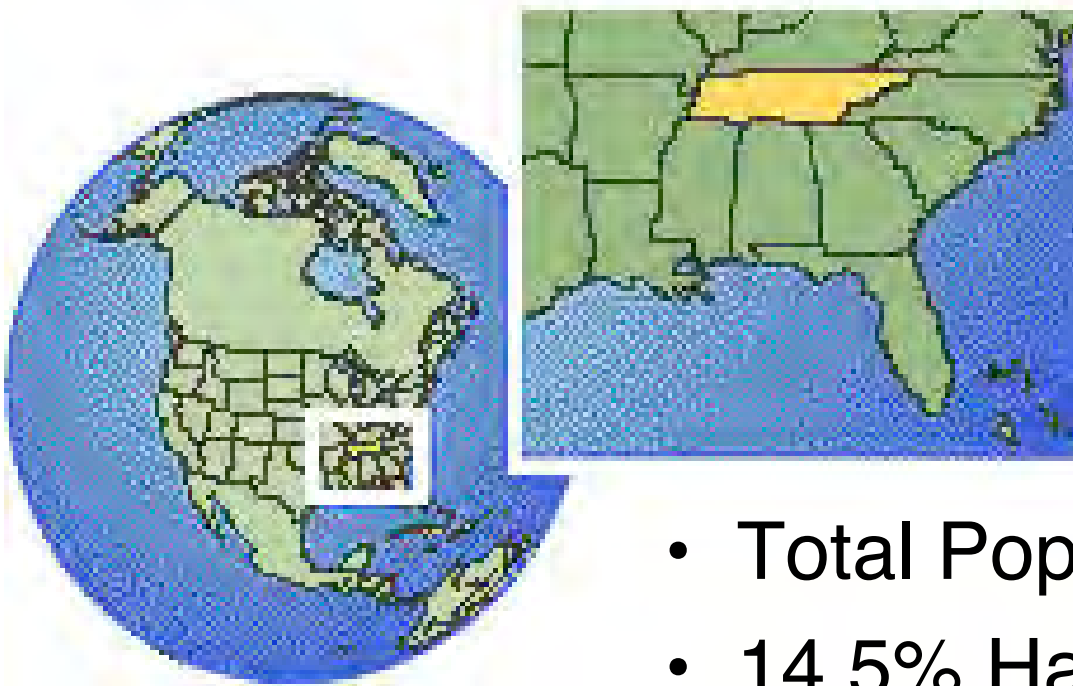
**Neighborhood Reconciliation
Services**

Johnson City, TN



Neighborhood Reconciliation Services

- Small, nonprofit organization
- Mission is to educate and train community members with the goal of implementing Restorative Practices
- Conferencing, community service program, truancy program, education program



Tennessee

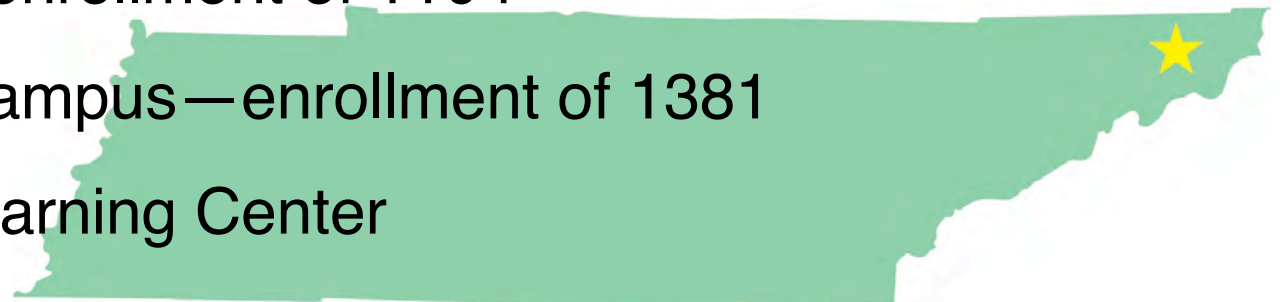
- Total Population = 5,689,283
- 14.5% Have no high school diploma
- 11% High School drop out rate among teens (30,000)
- Ranked 45th in US in number of high school dropouts
- Median Income of \$36,360



CITY OF JOHNSON CITY

JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE

- Total Population: 55,469
- 23.7% of population below 19 years of age
- Median Income \$30,835
- 15.9% of the population were below the poverty line
- One Middle School-grades 6-7—enrollment of 1073
- One High School—2 campuses
 - 8/9 campus—enrollment of 1104
 - 10-12 grade campus—enrollment of 1381
 - Alternative Learning Center



Truancy is..

- Defined as chronic absences from school
- Very Costly
- A stepping stone to delinquency
- Multi-layered problem
- Multi-generational
- A community issue



Conventional ways of handling

- Schools file petition with sheriff or local juvenile court
- Hearing before Judge
- Student placed probation
- Parents can be fined up to \$50 per unexcused absence
- Student can be removed from home & placed into state custody



How did we get started?

- Talk, Talk, Talk, Talk
- Listen, Listen, Listen
- Be Available
- Collaborate
- Experiment
- Be willing to fail

Process



- 3 unexcused absences—contact with parents by school official

- 5 unexcused absences—letter to parents
- 5+ unexcused absences petition filed with juvenile court
- Parents, student and school officials appear before judge. Facilitator is present.

- 
- Judge reads charge and makes sure that all parties understand reasons for hearing.

- Parents and student are given options of how case can proceed.

Only 2 cases were heard by judge after program was implemented.

- If conference is chosen, then parents, student and school officials leave courtroom with facilitator.

Conference

- Introductions
 - Script
 - Goals

- Role of facilitator

- To get to know family

- Create a relaxing environment

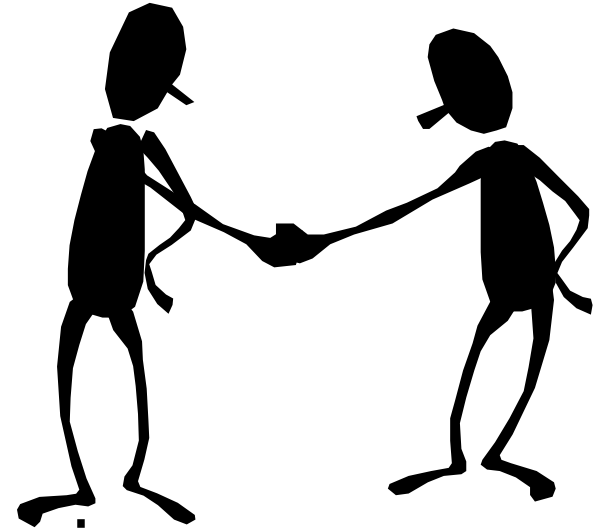
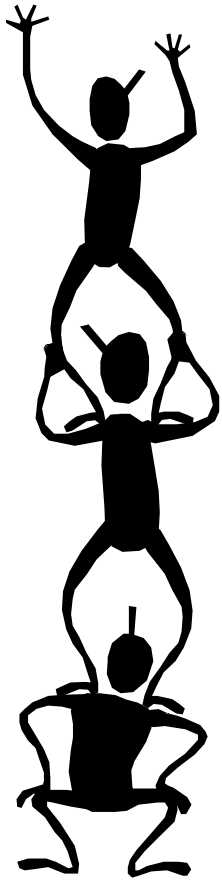
- Listen to both sides

- Take great notes

- Follow up on notes

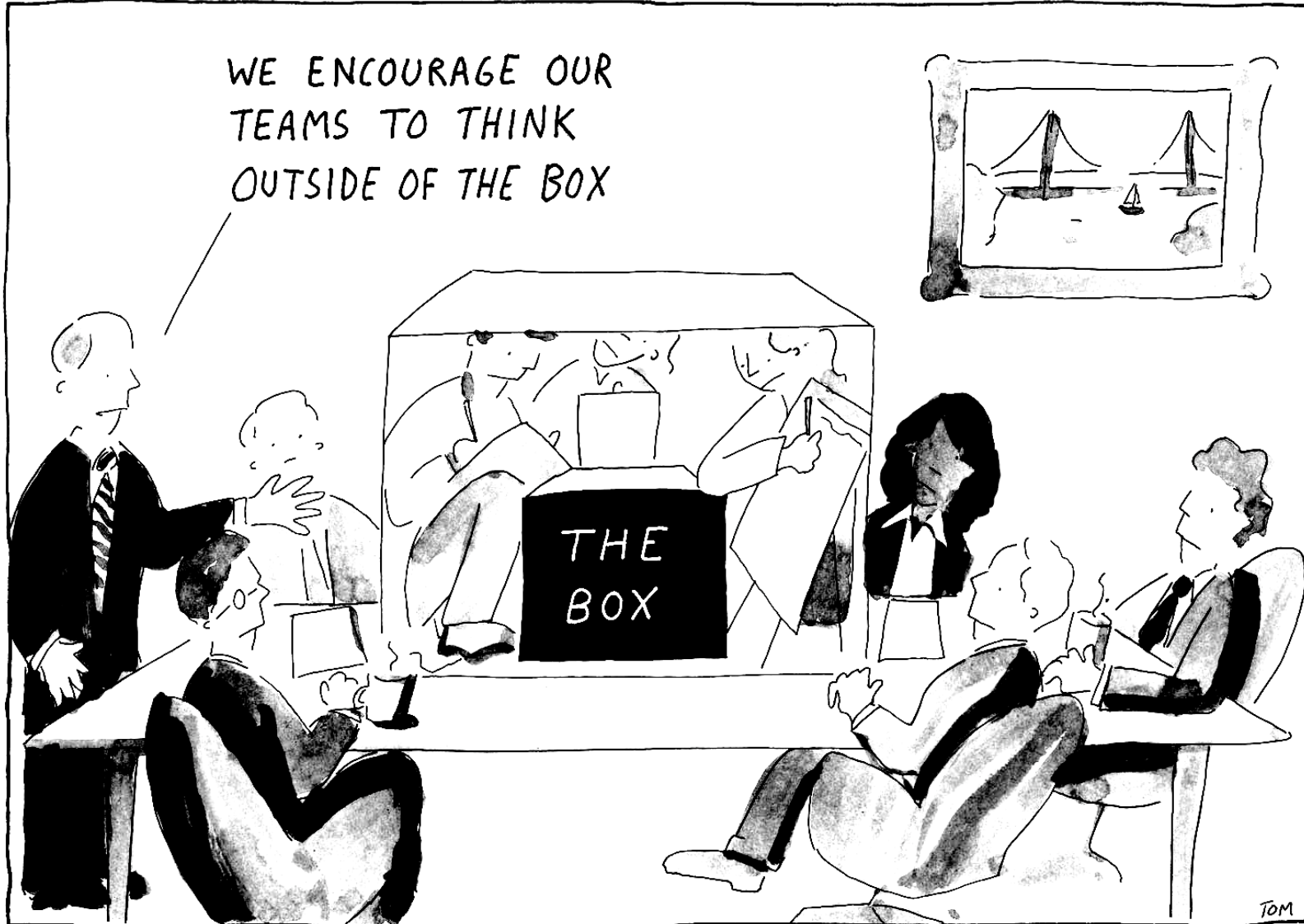
Agreement Phase

- Options for facilitator
- Input from all parties
- Differing from the REAL JUSTICE Conferencing model, the facilitator is not neutral and can make suggestions as to agreements
- Has legal teeth in it!!
Legal sanctions if not followed



BRAND CAMP

by Tom Fishburne



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TRUANCY CONFERENCE AGREEMENT JOHNSON CITY JUVENILE COURT

Date _____

This agreement was initiated by truancy charges for Indian Trail Middle School student _____.

This student has missed _____ days of unexcused absences. Following a conference with _____

(student name)

and _____,

(parents name)

these conditions have been agreed upon:

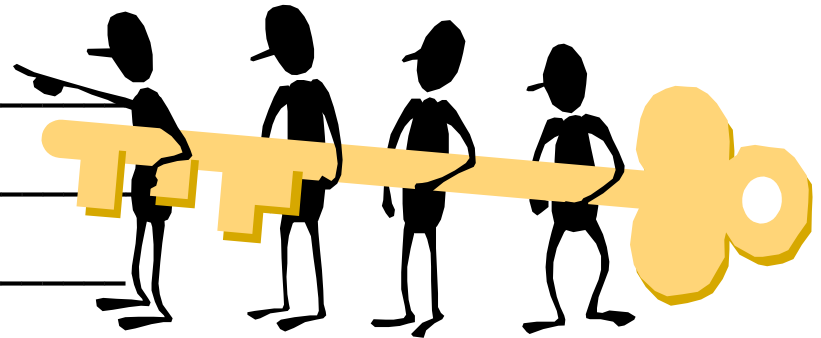
Summer make up class at Indian Trail Middle School (Required)

Failure to maintain the integrity of this agreement will result in additional penalties imposed by the Johnson City Juvenile Court. By signing below, you are stating that you give the facilitator/Neighborhood Reconciliation Services, Inc. permission to contact Indian Trail Middle School to inquire about attendance.

Student signature

Parent signature

Facilitator signature





Examples

- Provided alarm clocks to students
- Inadequate clothing
- Field trip expenses
- Transportation issues
- Language difficulties
- Chronic medical conditions
- Migrant medical care
- Parent's education





Follow Through

- Attendance Checks
- Set deadlines on agreement
- School and facilitator communication is **VITAL!!**
- Positive Reinforcement to parents and student



Statistics

- 53% cases dismissed
- 46% cases deferred to conferences
- 93% agreements completed
- 73% students attended summer school
- 20% referred to school counselor
- 20% referred to outside services

