



# SCHOOLWORKS REPORT: 2006-2007

## JUVENILE RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.

### Court-Involved Students Get Help to Succeed in School



SchoolWorks helps at-risk students get in school, stay in school and be more successful.

National research and JRP's decades of experience tell us that court-involved children — those in the foster care and juvenile justice systems — continue to do

poorly in school.

They are more likely than their peers to lag behind academically, more likely to qualify for special education services, more likely to be suspended or expelled, and, as a result, less likely to earn a high school diploma.

Court-involved youth, including those in foster care and those on juvenile probation also spend significant periods of time out of school due to lack of enrollment, moves between districts, exclusionary discipline, the lack of appropriate school placements and other factors.

In order to improve the educational outcomes of court-involved students, SchoolWorks pursues the

following goals, as they are relevant to the individual students we serve:

1. Re-enrollment in school
2. Establishing special education eligibility
3. New or updated school plans
4. New educational services
5. Less severe disciplinary actions
6. Decrease in suspensions/expulsions
7. Fewer moves between schools
8. Most appropriate school placements
9. Reduced student absences

10. Reduction in juvenile court involvement.

#### SchoolWorks by the numbers:

- **1,378 children served between July 2002 and December 2007.**
- **SchoolWorks opened 326 new cases in 2007.**
- **After expanding eligibility, SchoolWorks opened 633 new cases in 2006-2007.**

### SchoolWorks Expansion Helps K-12 Students

Grants awarded in 2006 by the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Portland Children's Investment Fund, and additional support from Oregon Foundations (see list on p. 8) have allowed SchoolWorks to expand. SchoolWorks originally served 8 - 15 year-old students. The

expansion allows SchoolWorks to serve court-involved students in all grades and focus on prevention for students in elementary school.

Expanding to serve students 16 and older also allows SchoolWorks to assist students with their transition goals related to employment or higher

education

The growth of the SchoolWorks program has also meant that it served 633 children in 2006-2007, including 326 in 2007, an increase from the average of 220 students served each year in 2002-2005.

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## Greater Understanding of Student's Needs



Jeray is a 5th grader. His mother passed away, and he lived for a while with his grandmother before entering foster care.

He had behavior problems and had difficulty doing his school work due to his mental health problems and his grief. He received support from a number of agencies, yet still struggled.

His teacher described him as unable to do his school

work and said he often had a "tough guy" attitude. She said that he demanded a lot of attention in school and required a high level of structure.

SchoolWorks brought together Jeray's foster parents, grandmother, DHS guardian and treatment providers to meet with his teacher and school staff. The group was able to discuss Jeray's history and his

needs and share what works with him.

With a team that works together and has a common understanding, Jeray has the support he needs to succeed in school.

While he still receives special education services, he is doing so well academically that his teacher is referring him to the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program, and Jeray is taking pride in his good work.

When students who had been struggling in school begin to succeed and recognize their own progress and take pride in their progress... well, there's really no better measure of success.

## School Stability and Support

Sophia was a 12 year-old elementary school student last year. She is bright but has an explosive temper at times. She was raised by a mother with a serious mental illness before entering foster care. Sophia's mother can say very cruel things to her at times.

Sophia was nearly expelled for injuring a staff

member at her school during one of her blow-ups. The school team recognized her emotional needs and instead began to assess her for special education.

In the meantime, Sophia's foster parents said they could not care for her any longer, and she was moved to a home in another district over the

summer. SchoolWorks ensured that the assessment was completed by the new school and also ensured that Sophia stayed in her new school after moving again to a third foster home. She now has a 504 Plan to provide the emotional support she needs and sees a counselor based at her middle school.

## Preventing Expulsion

Marcus is 17 years-old and lives in Portland. He receives special education services and was regularly getting sent out of class. Suspecting that he had additional special needs that were not identified or being addressed, SchoolWorks requested additional assessment. After Marcus was found

eligible for services related to an additional disability, his school started proceedings to expel him. SchoolWorks was able to find an appropriate alternative program that better suited his needs instead.

In spite of the plan, his high school principal sent a notice that Marcus was excluded from the high

school campus for 3 years (without any prior notice or hearing).

SchoolWorks was able to assist Marcus and his family with getting that 3-year exclusion rescinded by the superintendent. Marcus is now successfully attending an alternative high school program.

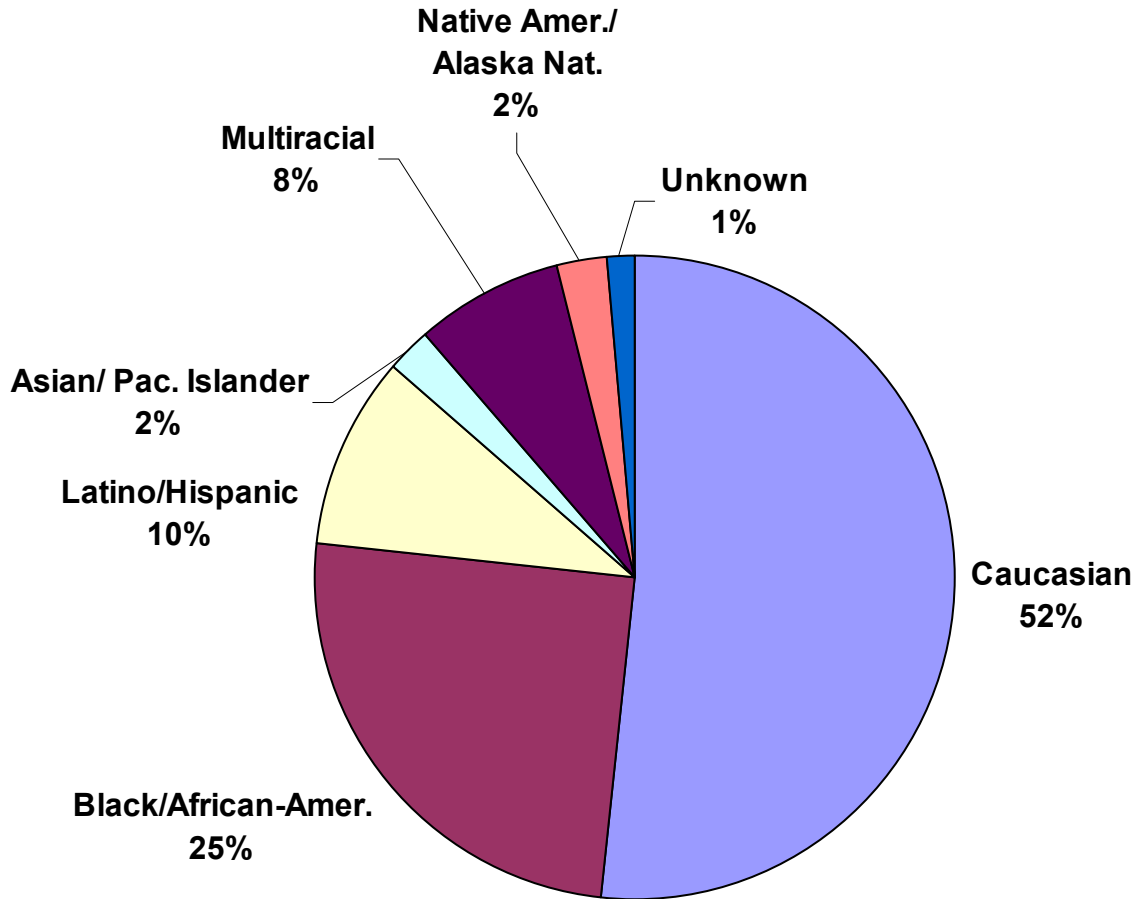


*(The names and other identifying information of SchoolWorks' clients have been altered to protect their privacy.)*

<b>Student and Program Outcomes (Recorded at Case Closing)</b>	<b>2002-2007 Percent of Closed Cases with Listed Goal (1,020 cases)</b>	<b>Success Rate: 2002-2007 (Program to Date)</b>	<b>Success Rate: 2006-2007 (633 cases)</b>	<b>Success Rate: 2007 (379 cases)</b>
Improved Academic Achievement	23%	86%	89%	89%
Improved Behavior	16%	94%	93%	93%
Reduced Absences	15%	68%	79%	88%
Re-Enrollment in School	21%	82%	85%	88%
Prevent Moves between Schools	9%	78%	89%	91%
More Appropriate School Placements	24%	91%	97%	99%
Reduce/Prevent Expulsion/Suspension	16%	89%	96%	100%
New/Updated School Plans	40%	96%	98%	99%
Established Special Ed. Eligibility	10%	85%	88%	97%
New Services Obtained	14%	98%	99%	100%
Less Severe Disciplinary Action	7%	89%	97%	100%
Reduced Court Involvement	3%	63%	92%	100%
Cross System Coordination	32%	97%	97%	99%

*SchoolWorks' advocacy enhances the high quality legal representation JRP provides to our court-appointed clients.*

**Race/Ethnicity of Students Served by SchoolWorks: 633 New Cases Opened in 2006-2007**



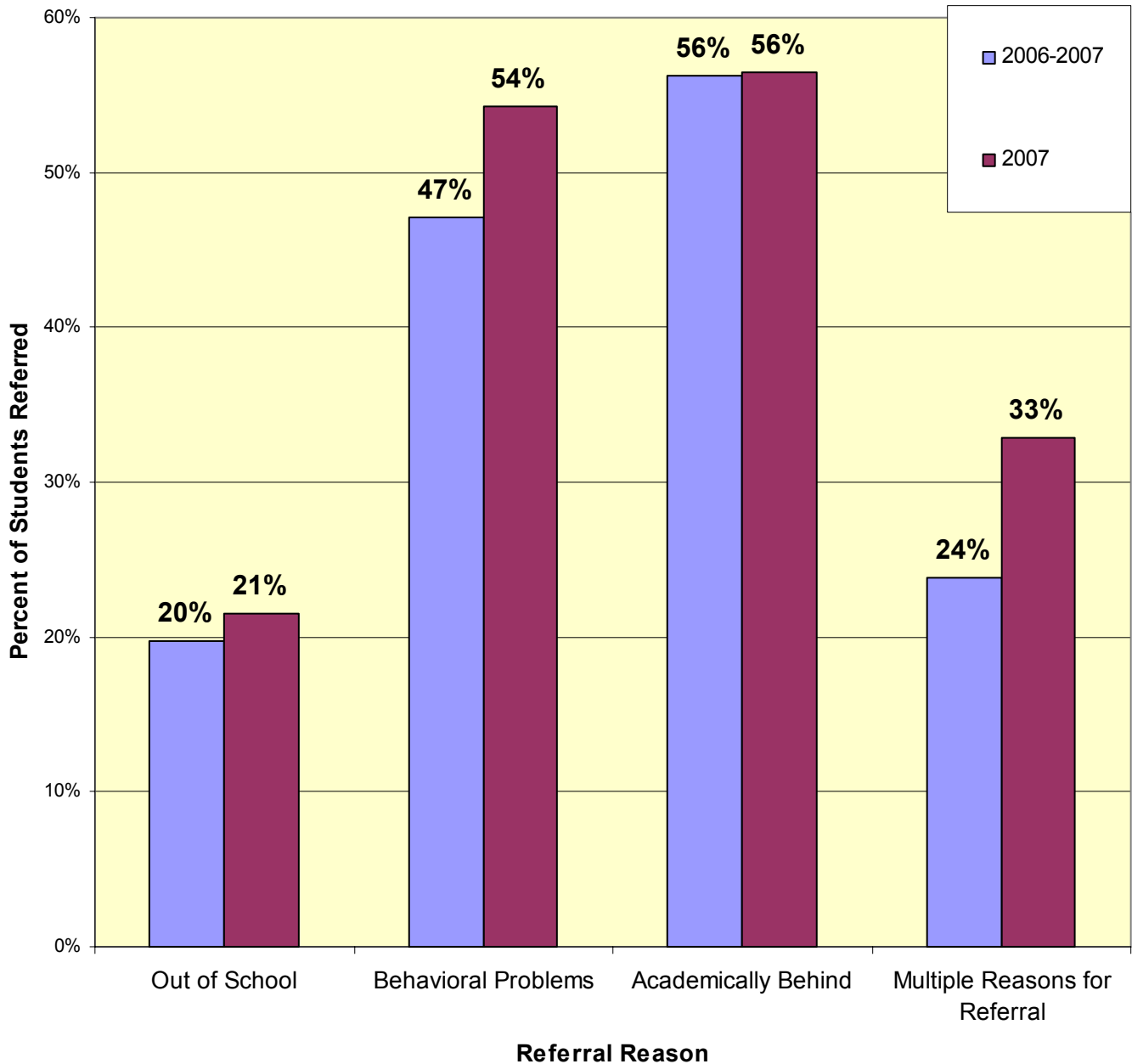
**SchoolWorks Staff in 2006-2007**

**Attorneys:** Angela Sherbo (supervisor), Brian Baker, Jennifer McGowan, Lisa Kay, Lynn Haxton and Mary Kane.

**Social Workers:** Kristin Hajny and Mark McKechnie

**Legal Assistants:** Gretchen Taylor-Jenks and Nick Demagalski

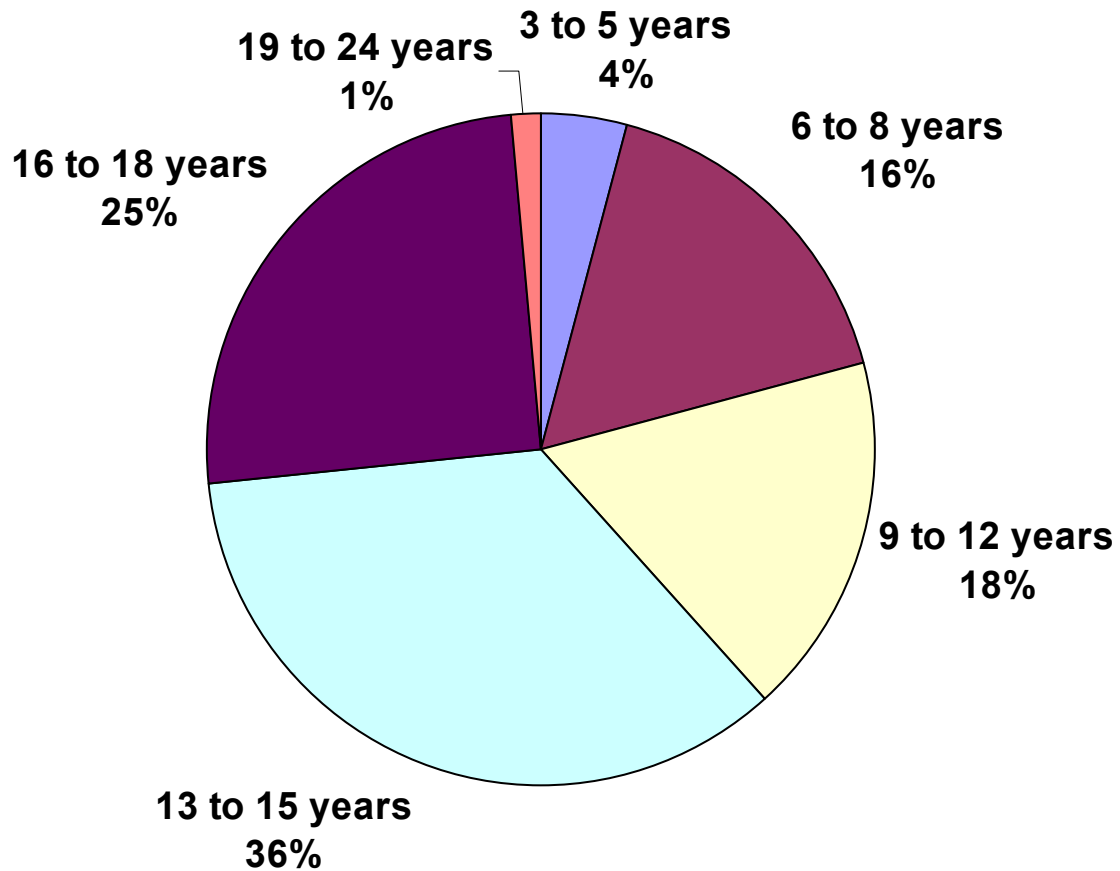
**Reasons Students Were Referred to SchoolWorks, 2006-2007  
(633 new cases opened)**



According to the Multnomah County Juvenile Justice Department:  
 In February 2006, 30% of youth on probation were not in school at all.  
 And over 50% of youth on probation who were in treatment for drug and alcohol or mental health problems had been out of school for one month or longer.



**Ages of Children and Youth Served by SchoolWorks: 633 Cases  
Opened in 2006-2007**



## School Enrollment and Attendance

Mindy did not attend much school her freshman year in high school. She has a developmental disability and school phobia. She prefers being in a small setting with small classes. She experienced a great deal of anxiety about attending a large public high school.

When Mindy moved into a new foster home in a new school district, her SchoolWorks attor-

ney went in person to deliver Mindy's Individual Educational Program (IEP) and other documents to the new high school and alert them about Mindy's special needs.

Nonetheless, it took over a month to get Mindy enrolled in a new school. SchoolWorks had to contact several staff at the local high school and district administrators.

Mindy was eventually enrolled in a small high school program that provided her smaller classes. She attends a special education "resource room" for instruction, as well.

Mindy still struggles but is now attending school much more frequently than she did last year. She is also preparing for a community-based externship program through her school.

## Approaching Behavior Creatively

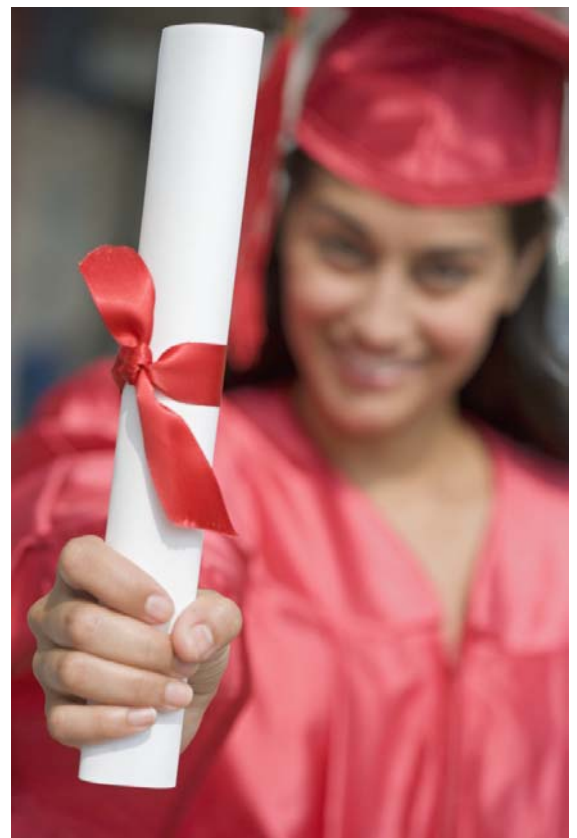
Jimmy is in foster care. He is legally blind and autistic. Due to his disabilities, he can feel threatened by unfamiliar routines, new people and new places. The school reported seeing an increase in aggressiveness and wanted the foster mother's consent to restrain Jimmy physically. When she balked, the school told her Jimmy might have to stay home and be tutored there.

SchoolWorks negotiated with the school district and social services that support Jimmy to bring in behavioral experts. Two experts evaluated the situation and

worked with everyone involved to develop other responses to Jimmy's behavior.

Rather than reacting to the aggressive behavior by physically holding Jimmy, the school began using things like classical music and floral-scented towels to calm him when he was becoming agitated.

The plans worked, and Jimmy hasn't been restrained by the school staff.



*Court involved youth are more likely to earn a GED certificate or to drop out of school, and less likely to earn a high school diploma, compared to their peers.*

*Earning a high school diploma will increase the chances that young adults can access higher education, become employed and be self-sufficient.*



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Juvenile Rights Project, Inc. is an Oregon non-profit corporation founded for the purpose of providing high quality legal services to children and families, without the means to retain counsel, through individual representation in juvenile proceedings, and through class-wide advocacy in the courts and legislature.

WE'RE ON THE WEB:  
[WWW.JRPLAW.ORG](http://WWW.JRPLAW.ORG)

### **Foundation and Government Support for SchoolWorks in 2002-2010:**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Oregon Law Foundation; the Jackson Foundation; Portland Children's Investment Fund; the Meyer Memorial Trust; Spirit Mountain Community Fund; the Collins Foundation; Juan Young Trust; the Boyd Family Foundation; Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust; Herbert A. Templeton Foundation; Marie Lamfrom Foundation; Jubitz Family Foundation; the Edward J. Byrne Juvenile Violence Prevention Grant Program; and the Hannah Andersson Charitable Foundation.

**Thank you!**

## Developing an Environment for Success



*Court-involved students often require a unique mix of academic, social and emotional support to succeed in school.*

Alex has been in foster care for several years. He has been fortunate to stay in a consistent foster home, where he lives with his siblings.

Alex has struggled since elementary school, but the principals and teachers had found strategies to help him behaviorally and academically through his first year of middle school.

Starting in the 7th grade, Alex was leaving class, getting into fights and falling further be-

hind academically. He was suspended several times. Alex had not changed that much in a year. But his school had a new principal, new school psychologist and Alex had new teachers.

SchoolWorks prevented Alex from being expelled in the 7th and 9th grades. Suspensions and other punishments had clearly backfired.

In addition, SchoolWorks provided information about Alex's history and special needs (including multiple mental health diagnoses and fetal alcohol effects) and worked with his IEP team to

change his class schedule, ensure that he had the academic instruction he needed, and implement positive behavioral supports that recognized Alex's many strengths and rewarded improved behavior, rather than merely punishment for bad behavior.

Alex is clearly maturing now and he is progressing academically. He has not been in any fights for a year. He has stayed in school and is proud of his success. He is working toward taking more mainstream classes.