

Richland School District Two, Columbia, SC

In December, 2002, a task force report was submitted to the school board and superintendent that encased new directions for student support within the framework of District plans for meeting the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act. The task force was composed of guidance counselors, school nurses, a social worker, school psychologists, school administrators, district office administrators, teachers, parents, community members, the religious sector, mental health, business representatives, students, State Department of Education and the University of South Carolina.

In its five year plan, the task force states:

“...In pursuing the District’s mission, we have made solid gains in strengthening the academic program and have made initial strides in enhancing student support programs and services. At the same time, it has become evident that there is considerable fragmentation, as well as significant gaps, in some of our efforts to assure every child reaches full potential. Fortunately, we are at a place where we can take the next steps in strengthening our systems for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting health development. This paper highlights the type of comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach we propose to develop and outlines how we will proceed.”

With respect to interventions and infrastructure, the report recommends the following:

“...Bring the learning support services under one umbrella administratively in order to coordinate services better on a primary prevention level and in order to give these professional administrative voice in decision making: create a Learning Support System director. ...”

Create school level resource coordinating teams to assess needs and coordinate all services that address barriers to learning, including both socio-emotional and health services as well as academic services. The resource coordinating teams should assess how the school is organized to respond to needs in at least six areas: (1) Classroom assistance and support; (2) Student and family assistance; (3) Community outreach and volunteers; (4) Home involvement in schooling; (5) Support for students in transition; (6) Crisis/emergency assistance and prevention. Systems of service delivery should be developed first and foremost on a primary prevention level, next on an early-after-onset level and then on a treatment of severe and chronic problems level. It is expected that the Learning Support System director will organize training for school resource coordinating teams....”

Learning Support Services Website

Director of Learning Support Services

Dr. Sarah J. Sanchez

803 738-3252

The Director of Learning Support Services deals at the district office level with those services designed to help a student be ready and able to learn. The persons under the "learning support" umbrella are those who provide counseling, consultation, prevention, referral and health services to students and their families to help the students address barriers to learning and to support the educational process. Please click on the underlined word(s) for a listing of personnel and their contact information. Below these listings you will find links to useful information about community resources, about immunization requirements and about health issues that can result in your student being excluded from school.

<http://www.richland2.org/learnsvcs/>

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Tel: 803 738-3252

December 12, 2002

Drs. Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor
Center for Mental Health in Schools
Department of Psychology
U.C.L.A.
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

Dear Drs. Adelman and Taylor:

I am sending a copy of the report submitted to our school board and superintendent this week for your perusal. Thank you so much for all of your support and information. I found the workshop here in Columbia and the conference at U.C.L.A. most helpful as I worked with this task force to develop the strategies.

Of course, the process is only beginning. In this era of budget cuts, we might have to sell working "smarter" first. However, we do at least have the backing of the superintendent. The nudges that NCLB is making will force a district such as ours that looks good when averaging achievement data but not so good when disaggregating data to take a good look at what we are doing.

When you have time to look over the strategies and actions, please let me know if you have any comments or any suggestions of resources.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Sarah J. Sanchez
No Child Left Behind Initiatives Coordinator

Responding to the Philosophy Behind the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002

NCLB Initiatives Task Force Plan

*School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students.
But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.*
Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (1989)

Task Force Members:

Coordinators: Sarah Sanchez and Dr. Cheryl Washington

Facilitator: Dr. Richard Inabinet

District Office Staffi- Lottie Chisholm, Dawne McLeod, Penny Tolson

School Administrators: Julie Amoth, Beth Elliott, Randall Gary, Uel Jones, Lori Marrero, Rose Pelzer-Brower, Keith Price, Dr. Maree Price, Audrey Ratchford, Cleveland Smith, Jeanean Tucker

Teachers: Chris Diemer, Sue Dillon, Delphia Giles, Renee McCray, Linda Mobley, Malinda Taylor, Pain Walker

Guidance: Sharlene Belk, Nancy Milman, Maxine Rosenfeld

Nurses: Jan Brugh, Beth Gladden, Judy Niles

Psychologists: Dr. John Hogan, Dr. Dylan McNamara, Dr. Shirley Vickery

Social Worker: Barbara Grossberg

Parents, Business and Community Members: Col. Keith Gallagher, Rev. Dr. George Gaymon, Eleanor Kellett, Yvonne Means, Val Richardson, Rev, Michael Walker, Dr. Don Wuori, Dr. Paul Van Wyke

Students: Jacqueline Basquill, Rausheed LeGrand

Other: Bettianne Gallion (Columbia Area Mental Health), Beckie Davis (State Department of Education), Dr. Theresa Kuhs (USC)

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB)

TASK FORCE - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The No Child Left Behind Act, signed by President Bush in January 2002, is the impetus for recent education reform designed to improve student achievement and to change the culture of America's schools. The act embodies four key principals - stronger accountability for results; greater flexibility for states, school districts, and schools in the use of federal funds; choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been demonstrated to be effective. This act also places an increased emphasis on reading, enhancing the quality of the nation's teachers, and ensuring that all children in America's schools learn English.

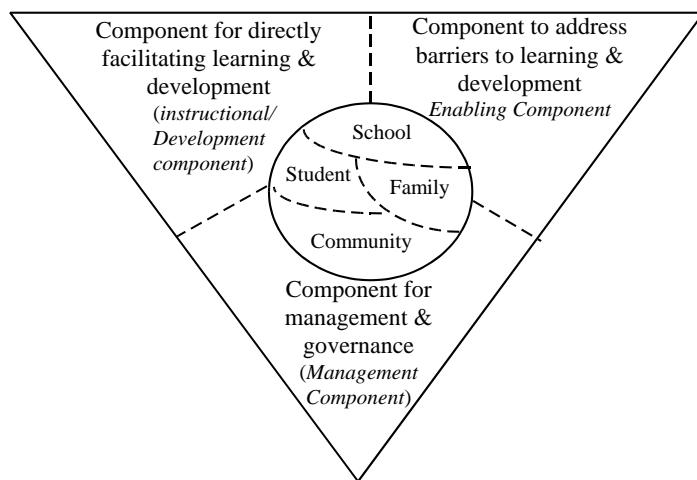
As a result of the implementation of NCLB, Richland School District Two assembled a task force to examine the types of services provided in the district to students who do not perform well academically. The goal of the task force was to develop a plan to be implemented over the next five years, that will allow the district educators, in partnership with parents and the community, to meet the needs of all students more effectively. The task force was composed of guidance counselors, school nurses, a social worker, school psychologists, school administrators, district office administrators, teachers, parents, community members, the religious sector, mental health, business representatives, students, State Department of Education and the University of South Carolina. The task force met in September, October, and November to develop the recommended goals for the district.

In pursuing the District's mission, we have made solid gains in strengthening the academic program and have made initial strides in enhancing student support programs and services. At the same time, it has become evident that there is considerable fragmentation, as well as significant gaps, in some of our efforts to assure every child reaches full potential. Fortunately, we are at a place where we can take the next steps in strengthening our systems for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development. This paper highlights the type of comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach we propose to develop and outlines how we will proceed.

Richland School District Two has accomplished a great deal in strengthening all facets of the academic program. And, we will continue to do so. Now it is time to take the next step in addressing the needs of those students who require something more to help them reach their full potential. That is, in the shadow of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the time is right for strengthening our approach to addressing barriers to student learning and, in the process, to do more about promoting healthy social and emotional development. Therefore, we are establishing as a priority the development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development.

In proceeding, we can draw upon and become part of pioneering initiatives emerging around the country that are rethinking how schools and communities meet the challenge of addressing persistent barriers to student learning and development. This initiative reflects a fundamental commitment to a three component framework for school improvement (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A three component framework for school improvement



In developing a component to address barriers to learning and development, a major emphasis is on improving school and classroom environments to prevent problems and enhance youngster' strengths. At the same time, essential supports and assistance are provided students who need something more to address barriers and engage or re-engage them in schooling and enable learning. This has led to this facet of school improvement being called an "Enabling Component." We are going to name this component the Learning Support System (LSS) in Richland School District Two.

For individual students, the intent of a LSS is to prevent and minimize as many problems as feasible and to do so in ways that maximize student engagement in learning. For the school as a whole, the intent is to produce a safe, healthy, nurturing environment/culture that reflects the school's mission and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism,

support and high expectations.

Most teachers and administrators have a clear picture of the external and internal factors that interfere with effective learning and teaching at their school. And they aren't making excuses, they are stating facts. Moreover, they are aware of the need to help address such barriers.

The current situation is that many of the learning support services are marginalized and fragmented. Bringing these services under one umbrella and bringing these services into the mainstream of the planning process at the school district (see Figure 1) level and at the individual school level will allow the district to respond better to the diverse needs of its student population. In addition, we need to study how we are using the learning support personnel that we already have and devise ways to increase their effectiveness as well as decide where we need to increase services. Recommendation 1 outlines these strategies.

Once we have the barriers to learning identified and strategies to deal with them developed, we need to examine closely how we deliver instructional services to those students at danger of being "left behind" and how we define educational services for students who are "pushed out" of the system. These strategies are summarized under Recommendation 2.

We know that we are not the sole stakeholders in promoting the educational development of students; we must partner with the parents who are hard to reach and invite them to share this responsibility with us. This will involve the development of innovative strategies that break down the "barriers" to participation and involvement. Recommendation 3 addresses these problems.

Finally, we need to perform some serious self-examination as a school district that is expanding at the rate of 600 to 700 students per year. Our schools are large and our district is expanding. How can we help each student (and, by extension, family) have a place where he or she feels that he or she can contribute, participate, belong? We have already begun some attempts at addressing this problem but we need to do more, particularly for students who come to school eager to learn but who leave our school system defeated. Recommendation 4 attempts to deal with these problems.

The No Child Left Behind Initiatives Task Force developed a list of 11 Strategies with actions under each strategy. These strategies fit in with our Aims as developed in our most recent Strategic Plan. Most of the strategies can be summarized under the recommendations as explained below. Following the "Recommendations" is a complete list of the strategies and actions developed by the task force.

Recommendation 1: Richland School District Two administrators and teachers recognize that not all students come to school motivationally ready and able to learn. We will develop and apply strategies that respond to the socio-emotional and health needs of the student that prevent him/her from learning effectively.

Recommendation 1. 1: Bring the learning support services (psychologists, nurses, guidance, social workers) under one umbrella administratively in order to coordinate services better on a primary prevention level and in order to give these professionals an administrative voice in decision making; create a Learning Support System (LSS) director.

Recommendation 1.2: Hire 2 more social workers immediately; add more social workers year over the next five years.

Recommendation 1.3: Analyze the professional roles and responsibilities of learning support personnel in order to make effective use of available professional training and skills to meet student and parent needs and to determine if more personnel are needed.

Recommendation 1.4: Analyze the assistance given to learning support personnel by clerical and teaching assistants to determine what is needed to increase the efficiency level of professional time.

Recommendation 1.5: Explore hiring additional Mental Health Counselors in partnership with the Columbia Area Mental Health Center.

Recommendation 1.6: Create school level resource coordinating teams (using existing personnel) to assess needs and coordinate all services that address barriers to learning, including both socio-emotional and health services as well as academic services.

Comment: The resource coordinating teams should assess how the school is organized to respond to needs in at least six areas: (1) Classroom assistance and support; (2) Student and family assistance; (3) Community outreach and volunteers; (4) Home involvement in schooling; (5) Support for students in transition; (6) Crisis/emergency assistance and prevention. Systems of service delivery should be developed first and foremost on a primary prevention level, next on an early-after-onset level and then on a treatment of severe and chronic problems level. It is expected that the LSS director will organize training for school resource coordinating teams.

Recommendation 2: Richland School District Two administrators and teachers will devise better ways to respond to the educational needs of students who do not acquire skills and concepts at a rate that keeps pace with district standards.

Recommendation 2.1: Assess the remedial/acceleration services currently available to students and develop recommended and organized approaches to remedial services across the district.

Recommendation 2.2: Focus on providing more quality service to young children who do not come to school ready to learn; consider creating an early childhood coordinator position.

Recommendation 2.3: Provide increased academic support for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students.

Recommendation 2.4: Provide training to teachers on differentiated instruction and on accommodations for individual strengths and weaknesses, not because of "disability" but because of "ability".

Recommendation 2.5: Promote the extension of and development of programs that will respond to the educational needs of students who do not learn well in traditional ways, recognizing that they, too, have the right to use public education as a means of transitioning successfully into the world of work (even if not with a high school diploma).

Recommendation 2.6 Explore non-traditional approaches to the delivery of instruction, such as flexible schedules, distance learning, apprenticeships, peer tutoring, service learning, concurrent adult education classes, summer school, pre-teaching etc,

Comment: We are required under NCLB to disaggregate scores and identify those populations of students who are not performing well. We already know from an early age that certain students will have difficulty in school. Using this information strategically to strengthen services for early intervention and then monitoring response to intervention should allow us to have a positive impact on student learning. In addition, we need to study carefully the remedial strategies we are using in order to use research based, effective strategies and discard some of the piece-meal attempts at remediation we have used in the past. Finally, we need to recognize that not all students will progress successfully through our system, in spite of these organized attempts; we need to continue to develop structures that will assure these students a successful transition into the world of work.

Recommendation 3: Richland School District Two administrators and teachers will promote increased parental involvement from those segments of the population who do not usually participate.

Recommendation 3.1: Provide outreach services into the communities.

Recommendation 3.2: Provide parent education services at sites and times convenient to parents such as English classes, parenting classes, school readiness classes, etc.; consider adding parent educator positions.

Recommendation 3.3: Provide innovative ways for parents/grandparents to contribute to schools,

Recommendation 3.4 Provide a staff development program that addresses communication skills that build trust and demonstrate respect between staff and students and parents,

Comments: Many parents who do not participate in school activities are the same parents who did not do well in school themselves or who do not feel comfortable in the school setting. We need to step outside of our own cultural "boxes" and realize that most parents really do want their children to do well but often do not have the knowledge or the time or the personal characteristics to make that happen. The school leaders must take the first step in breaking down the barriers to participation.

Recommendation 4: Richland School District Two administrators and teachers will examine the restructuring of schools into smaller units so that students can find a place to belong.

Recommendation 4.1: Create a committee to study ways to restructure schools into smaller units at all levels.

Recommendation 4.2: Develop school-based structures and activities that will foster a sense of community and belonging within the school, promote positive contributions from all students and provide additional opportunities for leadership.

Comment: Our students who perform poorly academically are at risk for disengaging from

school at an early age, even though they must continue to attend until age 17. Many students would rather appear "bad" than "stupid" or would rather withdraw rather than try once they have met with repeated academic failure. Increasing the opportunities to contribute and participate positively should increase the motivational level of the student, along with the strategies already suggested to assist the student in overcoming barriers and in improving skills.

The task force was composed of a dedicated group of educators, parents, community members, professionals and students. Below are the strategies and actions that were developed by them in three meetings in the fall of 2002.

Goal 1: Richland School District Two will address barriers to development and learning by organizing a comprehensive learning support system (LSS)

Coordinate services of guidance counselors, school nurses, school psychologists and school social workers; consider adding school resource officers and school mental health workers to this list.

Increase the number of school social workers from one to three immediately; add more social workers each year over the next five years.

Seek funding through grants and outside sources.

Address barriers to learning by focusing on each of these six areas:

- Classroom assistance and support
- Student and family assistance
- Community outreach and volunteers
- Home involvement in schooling
- Support for students in transition
- Crisis/emergency assistance and prevention

Develop school level resource coordinating teams to assess needs and coordinate all services that address barriers to learning

Develop systems for the resource coordinating teams to address barriers to learning on a *primary prevention* level, an *early-after-onset* level and a *treatment of severe and chronic problems* level

Develop a comprehensive list of community resources available to supplement the LSS

Provide staff development for all staff members involved in the comprehensive learning support system (LSS)

Goal 2: Richland School District Two will increase the level of comprehensive learning support services available to students

Increase the number of school social workers from one to three

Increase the number of guidance counselors, psychologists and school nurses, based on identified needs

Increase the number of mental health workers in partnership with local Mental Health agency

Analyze and define professional roles and responsibilities of learning support personnel in order to make effective use of available professional training and skills to meet student and parent needs; the goal should be to increase the availability of these staff to provide services on a primary prevention level (such as guidance counselors providing direct support/advisement to all students)

Provide clerical support to learning support personnel to increase the efficiency level of professional time

Goal 3: Richland School District Two will support the development of mutual respect and trust with school personnel, students, families and communities

Continue existing mentoring programs and expand to all schools to promote partnerships between students and caring adults

Provide a staff development program that addresses communication skills that build trust and demonstrate respect between staff and students and parents

Provide support for students and families as they experience transitions such as moving into the community, entering a new school level or exiting school

Expand prevention programs that address topics such as anger management, conflict resolution, peer mediation, service learning, affirmation of cultures, bullying, gang awareness, etc.

Develop school-based structures and activities that will foster a sense of community and belonging within the school, promote positive contributions from all students and provide opportunities for leadership

Create a committee to study ways to restructure schools into smaller units at all levels

Continue to promote school-business partnerships and alliances with community agencies

Extend school partnerships with local businesses, institutions, colleges, service organizations, military personnel and churches

Goal 4: Richland School District Two will provide academic support for students who acquire skills and concepts at a rate that does not keep pace with district standards

Assess the remedial/acceleration services currently available to students based on student need

Develop a list of district-recommended approaches to remedial services across the district

Assess remedial needs of students at each school and design a school-wide approach to the provision of appropriate, flexible, research-based strategies

Use disaggregated test scores to identify additional groups of students who require more extensive strategies; provide the resources that will meet their needs

Provide staff development on designing interventions to meet specific student needs and on measuring the response to the interventions

Analyze the curriculum in view of addressing diverse student needs; one curriculum does not address all needs

Provide staff development to broaden teachers' knowledge and skills on necessary accommodations for students whether or not they are educationally disabled under Section 504 or IDEA

Explore non-traditional approaches to the delivery of instruction, such as flexible schedules, distance learning, apprenticeships, peer tutoring, service learning, concurrent adult education classes, summer school, pre-teaching etc.

Continue and expand successful alternative programs such as *Career Prep*, with consideration being given to creating other opportunities for technical or vocational education

Identify teachers at all levels who have a history of success with hard-to-reach or hard-to-teach students; provide them with incentives (smaller class sizes, additional resources and additional planning time) for teaching these students

Assess current use of paraprofessionals for academic remediation; develop a model for effective use and provide training in the identified model

Goal 5: Richland School District Two will increase the quality and number of services to children ages three through six

Incorporate space for child development programs into the planning for all new elementary schools

Provide a space in a child development program for every student whose parent requests it

Assess current instructional strategies in all programs for three through six year olds; align these with research-based practices, such as phonemic awareness and language development

Expand the resources available to parents and grandparents in the district Parent Centers through Parent Educators; expand efforts for early parental involvement through outreach efforts in the community

Address the unique needs of grandparents rearing grandchildren

Identify younger siblings of at-risk students, assess the need for intervention, and provide targeted interventions, if needed

Install sound-field FM systems in first grade classrooms in Title I schools to enhance opportunities for students to attend to instruction and learn language based skills

Develop a protocol for identifying students at risk for school difficulties that will link them to a flexible set of school services at the primary prevention or early-after-onset level

Develop on-going *monitoring* procedures that will allow school personnel to evaluate at-risk students' response to interventions and adjust instructional strategies

Goal 6: Richland School District Two will seek to increase the level of parental involvement in the schools

Provide outreach services, such as home visits from teachers and administrators, to parents of students who are not responding to regular lines of communication

Disseminate information regarding identified "needs" within the school (programs, activities, service projects, classroom volunteers, etc.) to encourage parents to offer their assistance

Invite parents to share their skills, talents, interests and hobbies that might benefit the school

Challenge every parent to make a contribution of their time, talents or abilities to the school at least once during the school year

Provide informative sessions such as the Parent University for parents to better understand school (how to help your child with homework) and school culture (expectations, procedures, etc.)

Promote family nights at school that include meals, activities for students, childcare and parenting sessions

Hold sessions for parents in community settings, such as housing complexes, churches and community centers

Provide staff development training that models respectful ways to approach parents and strategies for conducting parent conferences

Continue to encourage positive phone calls home from teachers

Provide opportunities (surveys, response cards, questionnaires, etc.) for parents and students to

give feedback on the various functions and activities associated with school operations

Provide English language classes for ESOL parents and children on an on-going basis in the afternoons or evenings or weekends at the local community or school sites

Goal 7: Richland School District Two will ensure quality instruction from quality teachers for all students

Use teacher efficacy research to improve the quality of in-service training for instructional staff

Monitor equity issues to assure that all students are afforded the opportunity to be taught by highly qualified teachers

Survey students, parents, and community members for feedback on critical dimensions of professional performance; use the survey results as a part of planning for staff development training

Provide on-going staff development for administrators and teachers in the area of differentiated instruction that responds to learning styles as a means to broaden skills and knowledge that will aid struggling students

Provide opportunities for teachers to observe master teachers during instructional times and to share best practices in workshops

Strengthen professional support for teachers through mentors, peer coaching, study/discussion groups, etc

Continue offering courses in classroom management strategies for graduate credit for teachers

Offer graduate level courses, at district expense, throughout the school year at local school sites to provide opportunities for teachers to apply practical strategies and to dialogue with colleagues

Stress respect for the confidentiality of students and their right to privacy as a critical part of professionalism among teachers

Fund elementary and high school curriculum specialists

Goal 8: Richland School District Two will provide increased academic support for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students

Encourage reassessment of school level needs for ESOL services; incorporate the findings into the allocation of resources already available to schools so that all schools have ESOL trained staff available; seek additional funding for ESOL services through the regular district budget funds

Increase the knowledge and skills of all ESOL staff through professional development training in order to serve better the educational needs of these students

Create a recommended standard approach for ESOL staff to use for the instruction of ESOL students

Provide resources and support to regular classroom teachers of ESOL students as a part of the grade level/subject curriculum

Develop a resource pool of individuals in the community who are available for communication with persons of other language backgrounds so that ESOL parents can be invited to become more involved in the education process

Translate all Richland School District Two communications to parents into the parents' native language (legal mandate)

Provide language-specific parent meetings

Create after-school or evening programs that are taught in Spanish so that Spanish speaking children can continue to develop CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) in their native language while they are acquiring English during the school day

Explore creating a dual-language program that mixes English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students at the elementary level

Explore bilingual education programs

Provide family resource information on available services to all ESOL students

Goal 9: Richland School District Two will recognize and value students from all cultural and socio-economic, backgrounds of our community

Design and provide activities that will increase cultural awareness and foster positive social interactions of people of all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds

Include cultural awareness activities in the academic and guidance curriculums

Develop programs that highlight and applaud diversity through respect, appreciation, acceptance and tolerance throughout the school year

Organize a task force at each school that includes parents and students that identifies issues and concerns of the African-American, Hispanic and other minority communities reflective of the school demographics

Goal 10: Richland School District Two will work to improve the quality of involvement and communication of all stakeholders of the educational network

Use Richland School District Two television or other mass media to communicate with all stakeholders; consider broadcasting programs from various school locations at designated times

Continue to highlight the "good news" accomplishments and happenings of all students in the

district

Actively submit news articles in *The State* newspaper *Neighbors* section for all schools

Provide instruction for teachers in the area of computer-generated communications so that they can use technology such as web links to departments or grade levels and list serves

Communicate through e-mail with parents/students as an additional form of communication (not to replace phone calls and conferences) whenever possible

Goal 11: Richland School District Two will provide appropriate resources and support to all stakeholders in the educational process

Promote the development of programs that will respond to the educational needs of students who do not learn well in traditional ways, recognizing that they too have the right to use public education as a means of transitioning successfully into the world of work

Redefine the term drop-out as push-out and organize a committee to study, in depth, the unmet needs of those students who do not progress through the system; also, develop a better method of identifying students who do not return to school

Identify the effects of lack of money or resources in a home situation that would cause any student to be denied access to a Richland School District Two program (such as inability to provide own transportation, no money to purchase school supplies or to pay for field trips) and design strategies that help the student participate

Provide ways for families with limited resources to participate in school gatherings, such as parent buddies for transportation, meetings in local community centers