

Failure to 'parent' can lead to jail

Contributed by Caroline Spears
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Parents are responsible for their child's school attendance, behavior

Webster and Bossier Parishes are cracking down on parents who have lackadaisical attitudes when it comes to sending their children to school.

The 26th Judicial District Truancy Center, after consulting with Assistant D.A. Graydon Kitchens, has moved to hold parents responsible for all minor children's attendance and behavior at school.

Richey Jackson, director of Truancy for the 26th Judicial District said, "A parent in Minden was jailed on Wednesday, December 17, 2008, for eight days for contempt of court regarding their minor child's excessive absences and tardies."

The Truancy Center has altered the method by which parents are being petitioned to court.

Prior to the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, students sixth grade through twelfth grade were primarily held responsible, with parents being held responsible for children in grades kindergarten through fifth.

However, from this point forward, any parent of any K-12 student who fails to comply after reasonable attempts have been exhausted, will be charged with improper supervision of a minor.

Jackson said that the change in the way petitions will be written is worth paying close attention to.

"These petitions are for parents who are in non-compliance of the state truancy laws," he said. "The only parents that are petitioned are those who, after due diligence, have failed to comply with the laws."

The laws cited under the Revised Statute are 14:92, 2A(2)(C) and 17:221 A(2). A parent shall be fined \$250 to be paid within 30 days, or imprisoned not more than 30 days or both. The sentence will be suspended and the parent placed on supervised probation with the truancy office until the next court date.

"I hope that the citizens of the 26th Judicial District will appreciate and understand what my agency is attempting to accomplish," Jackson said. "The primary objective of this strong statement is an attempt to be proactive in addressing the very complex problems that affect our community and schools."