

Mayor Scott Avedisian announced today that Warwick's Truancy Court continues to have a positive effect on students and their families, with statistics from the 2008-2009 school year showing Warwick ahead of statewide averages in such areas as increased attendance and improved grades.

Avedisian met recently with Magistrate Angela Bucci Paulhus, whose jurisdiction encompasses the Warwick School district, Don Brown, the schools' attendance and disciplinary administrator and Patti St. Amant of the Human Services division who has worked with the court since its inception in Warwick in the fall of 2001.

According to information that Paulhus presented, statewide, 55 percent of students in the Truancy Court system improved their grades; in Warwick, 67 percent increased their performance. Seventy percent of Rhode Island's Truancy Court students improved their attendance last school year; in Warwick, the figure rises to 77 percent.

"Magistrate Paulhus, Mr. Greene and Ms. St. Amant have done a remarkable job of helping the Family Court system and our school department address truancy and the underlying factors that cause children to be chronically absent from, or late to, school," Avedisian said. "Numbers like these show that this program is very effective here and in communities throughout Rhode Island, and I have no doubt that we'll continue to see those numbers rise."

"I think one of the reasons that this is so effective is because when students and parents appear before the judge, they realize that there is a whole community invested in their success," St. Amant said. "The mission statement that the Mayor established when he took office – that all children will enter school ready to learn. All children will leave school ready to work and lead productive lives. All families and children will continue to live in safe and nurturing neighborhoods and communities" – is something that we embrace and refer to often during court sessions. And the families we serve realize that we're willing to work with them to give them the support they need to be successful."

There are a number of factors present in truant students: in Warwick, 50 percent come from one-parent families (roughly 64 percent statewide); 65 percent have a sibling who has dropped out of school (74 percent statewide); 42 percent have parents who graduated from high school (50 percent); almost 20 percent have parents with a criminal history (20 percent); 43 percent have parents with mental health issues (26 percent); 52 percent have some type of disability (36 percent); and 30 percent are on some type of medication (18 percent).