



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## GRADD Program Partners with Local School Districts to Increase Student Attendance

For more information, contact:

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In 2018, the Green River Area Development District was awarded a grant to help address educational neglect in children aged 5 to 11. The purpose of the grant is to help overcome obstacles and prevent referrals to Child Protective Services when a child has been habitually truant. The prevention program is a collaborative partnership between GRADD, DCBS/CPS, and school districts.

For academic year 2018-2019, the program was launched in two Daviess County Public Schools (Meadow Lands Elementary and Burns Elementary) and in Estes Elementary, of the Owensboro Public Schools district. Since that time, the program has expanded to include all elementary schools in the DCPS District, three elementary schools in the OPS District, and this year has added the elementary schools of the McLean County Public Schools District.

GRADD employees, Kristy James and Breeanna Cox, serve as Parent Engagement (PEM) Facilitators. When a child is at risk for referral to CPS for educational neglect, a meeting is arranged with the parent, school personnel, CPS representative, and a PEM facilitator. During this meeting, obstacles to attendance are identified, as well as available resources to help overcome those obstacles. An agreed upon plan is established to prevent further truancy.

According to Kristy James, "Families can face several obstacles that lead to chronic absences and tardiness, with parents feeling overwhelmed by multiple stressors and unaware of support systems and resources available to them. The Parent Engagement Meeting assures the parent they have a team available to help with their child's best interest in mind."

The program boasts a 91 percent success rate for the 2020-2021 school year, indicating that only a handful of the families served were referred to child protective services.

In the previous two school years, which faced unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Parent Engagement Meetings provided a vital link to improve educational outcomes for area children.

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*The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) is a regional planning agency serving the communities of Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster counties. GRADD offers assistance in the fields of aging, health, and social services; community and economic development; transportation planning; and workforce development. Our mission is to afford local governments and citizens a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities, and to provide leadership in planning and implementing programs to improve the quality of life in our district.*

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