

School on Wheels Workshop

Overcoming Obstacles to Success

March 12, 2011

Presented by Renee Longan, a Tutor Coordinator and a social worker, Brenda Byers, the case manager at a shelter in Ventura, and Vanessa Hofer, a new volunteer.

Issues relating to parents:

- Need for parents to follow through at school; lack of parental empowerment and awareness about school activities
- Parents' lack of education
- Parents' fear of school
- Parents concern about basic needs which overshadows their being informed about school
- Need to change perception between school and parents (both have preconceived expectations of other)

Student issues:

- Difficulty working with older students who are behind in school
- Dramatic issues; constant stress student feels
- Fear of authority
- Lack of ability to verbalize their feelings about a stressful situation
- Constantly changing relationships for students; people involved but not always connected especially in foster group homes

Solutions:

- Making their lives "normal" by hearing their situation and accepting it for what it is
- In similar way, listening and not judging
- Asking student "what is the worst and best thing that happened to you today"; end with positive and recognize that this is for today only
- Making small goals
- Not adding to the students' burdens by too high expectations
- Encourage students to participate in drama groups; tutors take younger students to plays
- Recognizing the unique role of the tutor with the student; you are making connections and creating consistent relationships. Foster youth especially need mentoring
- For parents: encourage free adult education courses or ask others to help read forms sent home from school
- Teachers see students more positively when a tutor is helping