MAKING ATTENDANCE A DISTRICT PRIORITY

HERMITAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tracy Tucker, Superintendent
Rosalynda Ellis, K-6 Principal
Mistie McGhee, 7-12 Principal
DATA...
Hermitage High School Attendance Data

HHS ESSA Score for Student Engagement

- 2017: 85.79
- 2018: 97.59
Hermitage Elementary School Attendance Data

% of Students with a 95% or Better Attendance Rate

- 2017: 46%
- 2018: 69%
- 2019: 81%
ACTIONS...
Policies...Do they need to be reviewed??

- Review your board policy and handbook policy
- Consider impact on time for learning if combine allowable absences for teachers and students!
Teachers...

- Why are teachers not at school and for what reason?
- Do you need to change policies?
  - Bereavement
  - Personal
  - Sick
  - School business/professional development
  - Leave without pay
Students...

- Why are your students not at school?
- Do absence policies need to be changed?
504s and Attendance...

- Monitor this!
- Parents will ask for a 504 to address attendance (likely for students with well-established attendance issues) when their ‘issue’ really doesn’t have an impact on their ability to attend school or arrive on-time
CONVERSATIONS!
TALK ABOUT IT...
TALK ABOUT IT...
TALK ABOUT IT...
Talk about why kids need to be in school with:

● School Board Members
● Parents
● Students
● Teachers
  ○ Students must be engaged in meaningful lessons with learning activities!
  ○ Students must see the WHY they need to be at school and not miss class!
STRATEGIES...
District Leadership Meeting

- Held EVERY Tuesday
- Review data weekly
- Social Worker makes home visits as needed
- Parent meeting with DLT to discuss issues

How you structure the meeting is critical = I always ask, “What can the district (we) do to help with this issue?”; I am not looking for a confrontation-I am looking for a solution to an issue and we all might have a part of the solution!

- File FINS, if necessary, but not until district has done EVERYTHING you can think of!
INVOLVE....

- Social worker
- Migrant workers
- Counselor
- Outside providers
- Coaches

- Mentors
- Aunts/Uncles
- Siblings
- Other staff members
- ANYONE
School Attendance Teams

- Phone Calls to parents made weekly (if not daily) when an absence occurs unless we know in advance
- Enlist help of staff members
- Enlist help of Spanish speaking parents and staff members
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<tr>
<th>A</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/15/18</td>
<td>3E, Erandi spoke with mom, She thanked Erandi for reminding her of the policy. 10/12/18 3E referred to Erandi for translation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2/18</td>
<td>6E, Ashley spoke with mom, about current attendance. was reminded that she has used all 6 allowable excused days per our handbook policy. 10/16/18 3E. Ashley spoke with mom about our attendance. She reminded her of the policy and her current days absent.</td>
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<td>11/28/18</td>
<td>2EU, Ashley reminded mom of her current absences and attendance policy. She said she would provide a note for his absence.</td>
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<td>9/1/18</td>
<td>5E. Ashley reminded mom, that he had used 5 of his 6 excused absences. 8/27/18 1E, changed to E. Ashley spoke with mom. mom was competing at a national chuck wagon race this week and will be gone all week. Ashley told her that he would use 1 of his 6 available excused absences.</td>
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<td>11/9/18</td>
<td>2.5EU2U, Ashley spoke with mom, he stated that he had been sick and went to the ER Wednesday and has a very bad ear infection. He was given meds and will return to school on Monday. I reminded her of his current days absent and the handbook policy.</td>
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<td>11/26/18</td>
<td>3E. Ashley spoke with mom about current absences and handbook policy.</td>
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<td>12/2/18</td>
<td>2EU, Ashley spoke with mom. Ashley reminded her of the current handbook policy and her current days absent. She said she would send a note for the 1 day.</td>
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<td>12/11/18</td>
<td>6E 2EU referred to Ms. Joyce Trotter-Hampton. 11/5/18 5E. Ms. Trotter-Hampton reported that she contacted the mother and mother said she was taking a doctor. 8/27/18 1E. Ashley tried making contact with mom. The only number on file was not a working number, had a note on his backpack that he provided to the office.</td>
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<td>10/22/18</td>
<td>3E, Ashley spoke with mom. She stated that she had a dr’s appointment on Friday. Ashley reminded her of her current days absent and handbook policy.</td>
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<td>11/15/18</td>
<td>Grandmother called to let her know that she tells the kids they have to go to school, but the mother will tell them it’s okay to miss. 10/23/18 Jade called mother with no return phone call. Jade spoke to mom and has not missed school since. 10/9/18 had a parent note to school. The note stated that she was sick on the 4th and 5th of October. It was signed by her grandmother. Jade and a number was provided. Mrs. Sherry called the number and asked if there was anyway to get a Dr’s note because it was her 6th excused absence. The mom, told Mrs. Sherry that she didn’t know what Dr she went to, that the parent note had always worked and that she wasn’t sure what the problem was that we were contacting her. She hung up on Mrs. Sherry. She then called right back and asked to speak with the principal. Mrs. Sherry told her that the principal wasn’t in the office today. The mom proceeded to say, “So you call and harass me and then when I try to speak with someone else, you say she isn’t in the office today.” at 8:43 a.m. Grandmother called the school and spoke with Sherry. Sherry put her through to Ashley. Mrs. Sherry told Ashley that mom, didn’t know where she went to the dr because she was the one who took her. She apologized for not having a dr’s note. Ashley explained to her that the only reason for the calls was that when she had spoken with them the week before, they said that they had a dr’s note to send in. Explained to Ashley that she had taken her to her dr in Gould, because mom was off at work. She also told Ashley that she would schedule all of her future appts after school hours or when school was out. Ashley told.</td>
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Example Google Sheets Shared Document
Social Media...

- Facebook reminders about school calendar
- Communicate consistently on what works for you - Facebook works for us right now! (We know because we surveyed!)
Resource that we use...

Attendance Works

https://www.attendanceworks.org/
Many of our youngest students miss 10 percent of the school year—about 18 days a year or just two days every month. Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten and even pre-K can predict lower test scores, poor attendance and retention in later grades, especially if the problem persists for more than a year. Do you know how many young children are chronically absent in your school or community?

Who Is Affected

Kindergarten and 1st grade classes often have absenteeism rates as high as those in high school. Many of these absences are excused, but they still add up to lost time in the classroom.

1 in 10 kids in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent. In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.¹

2 in 10 low-income kids miss too much school. They're also more likely to suffer academically.²

2.6 in 10 homeless kids are chronically absent.¹

4 in 10 transient kids miss too much school when families move.²

Why It Matters

If children don’t show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?³

| ↓ | 84% of kids with good attendance in K and 1st (missed 9 or fewer days both years) |
| ↓ | 43% of kids with at-risk attendance (missed more than 9 days both years) |
| ↓ | 41% of kids chronically absent in K or 1st (missed 18 or more days one year) |
| ↓ | 17% of kids chronically absent in K and 1st (missed 18 or more days both years) |

What We Can Do

Engage Families

Many parents and students don’t realize how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Community members and teachers can educate families and build a culture of attendance through early outreach, incentives and attention to data.

Fix Transportation

The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don’t make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.

Address Health Needs

Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.

Track the Right Data

Schools too often overlook chronic absence because they track average attendance or unexcused absences, not how many kids miss too many days for any reason. Attendance Works has free data-tracking tools.

These are a few steps that communities and schools can take. How do you think you can help?

²Chronic Absence in Utah, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012.
TAKE THE CREDIT (at high school level)
CONVERSATIONS WITH TEACHERS ABOUT MONTHLY ATTENDANCE, IF BELOW 95%

- We chose to exclude professional leave and school business leave
- We also exclude FMLA leave
Hermitage School District
Employee Attendance Disciplinary Chart

**Letter and Conference with Supervisor**
- Any employee missing 5% or more of the current contracted days for the year will receive a letter and a conference with the supervisor.

**Written Reprimand**
- Any employee missing 13 sick days or more of the current contracted year will receive a written reprimand for excessive absences.

- Any employee missing the number of sick days on the chart below that corresponds with their total number of contract days will receive a written reprimand for grossly excessive absences.

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- Any employee who receives a pay deduction due to missing a day with no days left to miss will receive a written reprimand. This can be sick, personal, or bereavement days.
ATTENDANCE NOTIFICATION

Date:

To:

From:

The Hermitage School District has placed an emphasis on attendance for both students and staff. Teaching and learning cannot take place in the absence of either the teacher or student. A pattern of excessive absences creates a hardship on the effective operation of the education system. The state of Arkansas has established a 95% target for student attendance, and this goal is being used by our Student Services Team, which meets weekly to review attendance for students. When reviewing staff attendance, the Hermitage School District is also going to use this 95% target.

According to our records, you have taken 7 sick days, out of 93 contract days as of December 19, 2017. This number of missed sick days are in excess of this 95% target. District policy states that:

- An employee may be requested to submit appropriate evidence concerning the cause of his/her absence in order to qualify for sick leave benefits, and
- If the employee’s absences are not subject to the FMLA, or are in excess of what is protected under the FMLA, excessive absenteeism, to the extent that the employee is not carrying out his/her assigned duties to the extent that the education of students or the operation of the district is substantially adversely affected (at the determination of the Principal or Superintendent), may result in reassignment or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

This Attendance Notification letter is intended to document the conversation that occurred between the employee and the Principal concerning attendance. This notification is intended to facilitate a conversation that prevents further absences, excessive or grossly excessive, according to our policy, and the possibility of further disciplinary action.

Administrators’s Signature

Date

Employee’s Signature

Date

Sick Leave Dates: 9/5/17 (1), 9/8/17 (0.5), 9/20/17 (0.5), 10/2/17 (1), 11/3/17 (1), 11/28/17 (1), 12/5/17 (1), 12/6/17 (1)
BUILD AWARENESS...
Elementary

- Class Competitions
- Compete for the most days in a row with 95% or better attendance
- Consider BIG TIME awards for students with impressive attendance

High School

- Reward perfect attendance by semester and year
- Advisory teachers check/chart absences weekly
Time

Continual Commitment

Conversations
Contact Information

Dr. Tracy Tucker, Hermitage School District Superintendent, tracy.tucker@hermitageschools.org

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Tracie Jones, UAM ERZ Director, jonestr@uamont.edu