

PARENT ENGAGEMENT FORUM

November 30, 2007

Minutes

In Attendance

Donna Anspach, Dee Ann Bauman, Erin Cranor, Robert Fowler, Verda Hines, Joy Kendall, Sherri Leany, Patricia Lopez, Beverly Patton, Skip Rapoport, Georgeann Ray, Cathy Rosenfeld, Beverly Waters, Paula Williams, Eva Melendrez, Holli Kalaleh, Mike Englert, Lauren Kohut-Rost.

Attendance & Truancy

Dr. Kohut-Rost introduced Mark Schumm, Coordinator for the Office of Attendance Enforcement and Lynn Goldberg, Attendance Officer.

- Policy and Regulation 5113, which addresses absences and truancy, was distributed. A parent requested placement of this item on the agenda for the purpose of clarifying and discussing truancy, attendance and tardy policy issues throughout the district. Mr. Schumm passed out additional information on absence and truancy processes, practices, and procedures.
- It was explained that the ultimate goal of the Attendance Enforcement Division is to encourage all students to regularly attend school.
- Mr. Schumm provided a short explanation of court involvement and the truancy process. Normally, three truancy notices result in a truancy citation.
- Ms. Goldberg (who is one of 24 Attendance Officers in the district) shared with the group that her duties include home visits, checking attendance, transporting students and attendance sweeps. She further noted that each Attendance Officer is responsible for 10-15 schools.
- Tardies were also discussed as a component of the overall attendance policy. It was noted that a district-wide tardy policy is not in place, but rather a school-based decision. However, as per Regulation 5113, "if a student misses more than thirty (30) minutes of the instructional period, the student has missed an essential part of the learning experience. Therefore, for purposes of attendance enforcement, a secondary student who is more than thirty (30) minutes late to any class period shall be counted absent from that class." This discussion expanded to include the

observation that some students may skip class altogether rather than face the consequences of a tardy violation. It was noted that the long-term consequence of absences is far greater than that of tardies.

- Dr. Kohut-Rost provided a short history of the secondary attendance policy and legislative mandates imposed. She also suggested that a proactive approach by school staff for tardy enforcement, including a regular presence in the hallways, will often impact the overall number of tardies. Ultimately, any tardy policy is largely based on need as some schools do not require the same measures as others.

Another question was raised regarding the language in SB 312 as it applies to parents. Although minor changes to existing law (NRS 392.140, 392.149, 392.170, 392.180, 392.200, 392.215) resulted from the legislation, the following applies to parental responsibility:

- A citation for habitual truancy will be delivered to both the pupil and parent/guardian;
- Parents can be investigated for failing to adhere to mandatory attendance laws;
- A criminal complaint (and subsequent prosecution) can be filed against the parent/guardian if the investigation indicates failure to comply with mandatory attendance laws;
- A parent may be prosecuted for intending to deceive authorities investigating truancy charges.

Assembly Bill 485 (§7), from the recently concluded legislative session, also addresses some of the issues discussed regarding parental liability for truancy when it states:

Any person, including, without limitation, a parent or legal guardian of a child, who knowingly induces or attempts to induce any child to be absent from school unlawfully, including, without limitation, requiring the child to provide care for a sibling while school is in session, or who knowingly employs or harbors, while school is in session, any child absent unlawfully from school, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

The legislation (§9) additionally imposes on the parent/guardian any fine imposed on a child adjudicated to be habitually truant if the parent/guardian knowingly induced the child to miss school. It was noted that other school districts have enacted a similar approach.

- Another question was raised about the activities of the Attendance Intervention Committee. Mr. Schumm reported that a pilot program at Rancho and Canyon Springs

is being explored in which information about alternatives to school absenteeism and strategies for attendance will be shared with both students and parents. It is hoped that the pilot can be implemented beginning with the second semester.

- Additional conversation focused on partnering with the local school community to inform, educate, and become involved with students more directly. Through cooperative efforts from all stakeholders, it is believed that attendance statistics can be improved. It was further shared that a collection of “best practices” attendance incentives was recently sent out in the weekly email to principals.
- The District Accountability Report indicates the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the 2006-2007 school year was 93.7%, with elementary schools traditionally having higher percentages than secondary schools. There were a total of 1524 habitual truancy incidents reported during that same year.
- Additional statistical information on attendance can be obtained by reviewing the District Accountability Report which can be found on the district website at www.ccsd.net.
- It was underscored that the keys are to continue the emphasis on education regarding the importance and benefits of school attendance, building positive relationships of trust and understanding with parents and the community, and determining the core cause of absenteeism in individuals. This topic will be further explored at a meeting in the spring.

Two-Way Communication (Cell Phone) Policy

At the previous meeting, parents were asked to review and consider a DRAFT cell phone letter that was being considered.

- Dr. Kohut-Rost outlined a history of the issue as raised by high school principals last year. A number of wordsmithing recommendations were made to the document by parents.
- Particular focus was on the use of cell phones in an emergency. The suggestions and comments of this group will be taken forward for additional consideration.
- Additionally, it was stated that we will hold the cell phone information until the new parent communication tool, Parent Link, is rolled out so that language regarding the tool can be included in the document.

Miscellaneous

- Eva Melendrez requested that members of this forum view the parent component of the CCSD website and provide input and recommendations for improvement.
- Suggested agenda items for the next meeting should be sent to Eva.
- The meeting concluded with Dr. Kohut-Rost thanking the group for their openness, willingness to vocalize their beliefs, and respect for each other in discussing many of the important issues facing the Clark County School District, students, and their families.

Next Meeting: January 18, 2008 (from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.).