



A Plan for Increasing Hispanic Student's Attendance Rates at Sky View Middle School

Scott Edmondson, Principal

EDLD 655 Analysis of Teaching and Learning



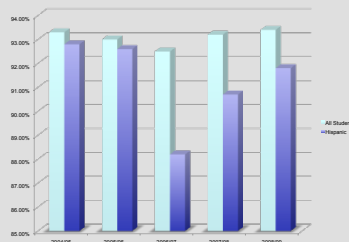
Introduction

Attendance at Sky View Middle School has consistently been above the federally mandated Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) target of 92% since the building opened in the Fall of 2000. During the 2008/09 school year, SVMS had it's highest overall attendance rate over the past five school years (93.4%), but we can do even better.

In terms of subgroups, our Hispanic students have the lowest attendance rate of all subgroups. On average, their attendance rate is 1.9% lower than the all student average. During the 2006/07 school year, the Hispanic student attendance rate was an all-time low of 88.2%. Although this subgroup does not make up a large percentage of our overall student enrollment (approximately 5%), it still is a concern. We would like for all subgroups to be at or above the 93% mark.

The School Improvement Goal (SIP) that will be addressed in this project is as follows:

ATTENDANCE FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS WILL RAISE FROM 91.8% TO 93% BY THE END OF THE 2009/10 SCHOOL YEAR AS MEASURED ON THE 2009/10 SCHOOL REPORT CARD BY DATE GATHERED FROM eSIS.



Range of Options to Achieve Goal

1. Encourage Hispanic students to participate in one or more extra/co-curricular activities and/or one of the performing arts classes that are offered at Sky View Middle School. Some examples are: Sports, Leadership, Yearbook, WEB Crew, Band/Choir/Orchestra, Lego Robotics, etc.
2. Hire an attendance officer to work with the families of chronic non-attenders.
3. Offer a Study Hall class for students to stay caught up on their homework, and not fall behind. When some students fall behind in their work, they feel helpless and start avoiding school.
4. When students fall below the 90% mark, they will have weekly "check-in" meetings with the Dean of Students until their attendance improves.
5. Small rewards to be given out on Fridays for chronic non-attenders who attend school for an entire week.
6. Monthly, end of term, and end of year drawings for students who have no absences during each time frame.
7. Recognition at end of term assemblies for all students who had perfect attendance for the entire term.
8. Pair up chronic non-attenders in the 6th and 7th grades with an 8th grade WEB Crew Leaders (Middle School version of Link Crew) for weekly check ins at lunch time.

Selected Options and Justification

As you can see from the list of options, most of them will require funding. Because of that, I am eliminating #2 (Attendance Officer) and #3 (Study Hall) as they both require additional fee that I do not have access to. However, the other ones are not out of the question, although #6 will require some soliciting of businesses for donations.

I have selected the following options for this plan...

- #1 Encouraging Hispanic students to participate in one or more extra/co-curricular activities and/or one of the performing arts classes offered at Sky View Middle School.
- #4 Weekly "check-ins" with the Dean of Students when a student falls below the 90% attendance mark.
- #5 Small weekly rewards for chronic non-attenders who attend school for an entire week (examples include granola bars, ice cream bars, vouchers at the student store, etc.).
- #6 Monthly, end of term, and end of year drawings for students who have no absences during each time frame.
- #7 Recognition at end of term assemblies for all students who had perfect attendance for the entire term.
- #8 Pair up chronic non-attenders in the 6th and 7th grade with 8th grade WEB Crew Leaders

Students who are engaged and connected to their schools do better academically (Johnson, Crosnoe, Elder, Jr, 2001). I believe that it is *vital* for students to be connected to their school and have a sense of belonging that they will want to be a school, that is why #1 above is very important! We have to get them plugged in where they best fit, whether it is a sport, a club, or a performing arts class. This will give them a huge sense of engagement, responsibility, and hopefully school pride.

We have had much success with weekly "Check-In" meetings with either the Dean, the VP, or the Principal over the past two years. Almost 100% of the time the students attendance begins to increase. This is in a non-punitive manner, and lets the student know that someone is keeping track of them and that we care about them. It allows an opportunity for the administrator to connect with the student as well. We typically combine this (#4 above) with the small weekly rewards for perfect attendance (#5) and the meeting usually takes place on Fridays. This works in conjunction with pairing up these students with a positive 8th grade role model (#8) at least once a week as well. This will be yet another person (besides parents, administrators, and teachers) encouraging them to be regular attenders. The communication component between the school and home is vital (NWREL, June 2004). It needs to be ongoing through this whole process and the school and family need to work together as a team.

Epstein, and Shelton (May 2002) have found that research is mixed on the effectiveness of incentives to raising student attendance. Studies have shown that incentives work well for elementary students, but questions whether or not they work well for long term motivation in older students. To be effective, incentives need to be used in conjunction with other strategies to be most effective, and not be used as a stand alone strategy.

Sky View Middle School's Attendance Plan

During the two weeks leading up to the beginning of the school year, administrators and counselors will review attendance records from last year for both Hispanic students and other chronic non-attenders from last school year. Counselors and administrators will make phone calls home to targeted students to encourage them to participate in one or more extra/co-curricular activity and/or a performing arts class being offered at school (#1). Student connectedness is the goal of this first step. We strongly believe that if we can get the student connected to the school, they will like being there.

Starting the second week of school, the attendance secretary will provide all administrators with an attendance report highlighting all students below the 90% mark. A phone call home will initiate this plan. We will ask if there are any issues at home that we weren't aware of, or that we could help with that would begin to address the absence issue. It will be vital for us to develop a team plan with the parents to encourage their student to be at school. Part of the plan will be starting the Friday check-ins with the Dean (#4), and having their 8th grade WEB leader begin to meet with them during lunch one time a week (#8). During an initial meeting with the student, the administrator will find out what type of small rewards would be motivating for the student if they attended school a full week at a time (#5). Depending on the student, it might be something as simple as a school pencil, art supplies, 10 minutes of shooting baskets with someone, ice cream bar, etc.

At any time that a student's attendance drops below 92%, this initial part of the Attendance Plan will go into effect. Conversely, at any time that the student's overall attendance percentage raises back to the 92% mark, they will shift to the longer term incentives (#6) that all students are eligible for. These incentives are rewards for students who can maintain perfect attendance for an entire month (up to 9 opportunities), term (up to three opportunities), or the entire school year. Student recognition in front of their peers is important as well, that is why we will be handing our certificates and recognizing students each term who maintain perfect attendance for the entire 12 weeks (#7)

Attendance Plan cont.

Possible Rewards

MONTH: ice cream party, Italian soda party, pizza party, etc
TERM: Possibly same as above, plus recognition at the end of term assembly, and drawings for donated items such as skate boards, bicycles, scooters, etc.

YEAR: Recognition at end of year assembly, plus drawings for donated items such as ipod, mp3 player, portable dvd player, tv/dvd combo, etc.

*Donated items would need to be solicited from local stores (Wal-Mart, Fred Meyer, Target, bicycle shops, etc), and our PTSA.

Budgetary Impacts

The main financial impact would be for the small weekly and monthly rewards. If we have a difficult time soliciting donations for the term and end of year drawings, then we might need to help purchase them. Some stores require you to match 50% of the value of the donated item. We have approximately \$700 set aside from our **School Improvement Fund** and **At-Risk Fund** to purchase reward items for this plan. We will also have access to money generated from our school-wide fundraiser in the fall to help purchase items.

Projected Outcomes

With our focus on both the small Hispanic population, as well as the chronic non-attenders here at Sky View, I believe that we should be able to achieve this goal of raising the Hispanic student's overall attendance rate from 91.8% to 93%. We have never put a focus on these students, and have historically not put much effort into addressing attendance issues. This plan will force us to do so.

If we can 1) get students connected and engaged in school programs, 2) provide opportunities for them to be successful, 3) let them know that we are concerned about them and are here to support them, 4) create a strong school and family team, and 5) reward them for positive attendance efforts/choices, then I am confident we will be able to achieve this goal!

References

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