

El Cerrito Senior High

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Subject: Discipline, Truancy, Data Use

Practice: Intervention, Parent/Student Group Intervention

Truancy Intervention

To address chronic truancy, El Cerrito High School established holistic group intervention meetings designed to inform students and their parents of available campus supports and guide families through collaborative problem-solving. Staff worked with each parent/student pair to review and discuss student academic performance, attendance, behavior, the issues involved, and how the school can support the student/family.

The purpose of the holistic group intervention meetings was to determine the root of the problem, and to strengthen support and relationships with students. When a student's non-attendance reaches a chronic level, a formal letter is sent home and a staff member calls to personally invite the student and a parent(s) to attend a group meeting. Every two weeks, the S3 coordinator, the vice-principal, and a health center staff conducted these hour long meetings. Although families are warned of the legal consequences of continued non-attendance, the meeting is designed to inform families of the various supports available on campus and to guide families through collaborative problem-solving. Staff work with each parent/student pair to review and discuss three types of information:

1. data on grades, discipline referrals, and attendance/tardies;
2. why attendance matters and how education is tied to future success; and
3. the root cause of the issue and how the school can support the student/family.

By the end of the meeting, families have had an opportunity to dialogue with a staff member, request supportive services, and formalize a written action plan to address the root cause(s) of the non-attendance. Conversations range from reviewing options for academic tutoring to setting up peer conflict mediation, with dozens of topics in between. This strategy also provided the school a sustainable and timely way to comply with new changes to Ed Code 48264.5 that encourage a parent meeting to "discuss the root causes of the attendance issue and develop a joint plan to improve the pupil's attendance." El Cerrito has found that holding a group meeting with staff circulating to talk with each family is an efficient and productive use of time that has "collateral benefits." The S3 coordinator reports, "It's the highlight of my week; I feel great about my work and the school after one of these meetings."