

January 27, 2012

Innovative strategies, persistence help to boost student attendance

Being in school every day not only pays dividends in increased student learning, it also can yield other tangible rewards for them and their families.

Not to mention SAISD's bottom line in terms of the funding earned for Average Daily Attendance.

To improve all of the above, SAISD's top priority for 2011-12 is attendance. And across the District, schools are taking a variety of approaches to meet that objective. These are just a few examples.

Persistence and consistency count

Perennially first among SAISD middle schools in attendance for the past two years is Whittier, where getting students to class is a team effort.

"Everyone on campus is involved," said coach Anthony Montoya, whose duties include discipline, a major component in fighting absenteeism.

There, staff combines tangible rewards for attendance with instilling in students life-long habits of personal responsibility.

"We stress that it's not just about now. It's about their futures. It's about going to class when they are in college with no one there to tell them. It's about someday being at work because you have a family depending upon you," he said.

Both students and their parents receive regular reminders on the importance of education, and when absences occur the school staff unites to make phone calls. And not to leave messages. No one gives up until speaking with someone.

The majority of parents appreciate the school's interest in their child, Montoya said. Some even take a proactive approach by calling in to report when their child is ill or out for a doctor's appointment.

"Because they know otherwise we'll be calling them," he said. "Being persistent and consistent is the key to success."

Selecting attendance incentives also is a team effort at Whittier.

These include free dress day Fridays, popcorn and movie days and a raffle that was held to celebrate first semester perfect attendance.

More than 300 students - about one third of the enrollment - qualified.

Prizes included iPods and video games.

Principal Noemi Saldivar also acknowledged the work of attendance auditor Jeannette Brandon for "her outstanding efforts in working with our teachers and attendance committee in reaching parents, making home visits and being relentless in finding our drop outs and absentee students."

Graduation is the goal

"It's staying after it and on top of it and getting everyone involved," said Highlands HS principal Lorna Klokkena, whose campus's ADA rose to 93.9 this year from 90.7 in 2010-11.

Letters home, PENS messages, personal phone calls and vigilance are paramount.

"We tell parents the goal is for their child to

graduate. In order for them to do so and to achieve academic success they need to be in school," she said.

As an added bonus, students whose attendance was perfect between the Thanksgiving and winter breaks were eligible for prizes including gift cards, iPods and Xboxes provided through funding from SWBC Communications. Another popular incentive is jeans and spirit shirts days.

Herff Italiano Café

Among the most creative and well-received incentives is Herff ES's transformation into a café for fancy restaurant-style family dinners.

Drawings are held the day following a long break - usually high absentee days - and one student and his or her family from each class are selected to attend. To qualify, the child whose name is drawn must be present that day.

The next dinner is scheduled after spring break.

Funding is provided through United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County and the dinners are prepared by representatives from school partner the Presa Community Center.

"I dress up as *maitre d'* and my great staff (the servers) dress in white shirts and black pants to help set the scene," principal Dr. Traci Smith said.

Parents expecting a buffet-style meal are pleasantly surprised when Smith announces them by name and party number, and then they are escorted to a specially-reserved table.

In addition to serving, staff also performs all decorating, set up and clean up duties.

Next year's theme will be a Hawaiian luau.



Principal Dr. Traci Smith (far left) assumes the role of *maitre d'* for family dinner nights at the Herff Italiano Café, where parents and their children are treated to an all-you-can-eat spaghetti feast with all the trimmings.

Campus-based bond projects on time and on budget

Implementations for SAISD Bond 2010 continue, with renovation designs to Alamo Stadium moving forward.

Trustees voted in early January on a renovation field option that includes football, track and soccer at the stadium, an option that will open up the facility to a greater number of student athletes.

Following are other projects moving along.

- Security fencing is complete or substantially complete at 16 schools and proposals are being

evaluated for seven campuses.

- Keycard access system installations are in progress for 10 campuses and complete or substantially complete at 25 of 68 schools.
- Security camera bid packages for schools not receiving major construction are being developed.
- Designs are in progress for career exploration labs at Irving, Rogers, Tafolla and Twain middle schools.

- School renovations are on time and on budget, with projects at various stages. At the Jan. 17 School Board meeting Trustees approved schematic designs for the first two schools — Cameron and Ogden elementaries.



Applicants sought to serve SAISD Trustee District 3 term

The School Board invites qualified District 3 residents who would like to serve as a Trustee to submit a letter of interest, résumé and proof of residency and complete an application by Friday, Feb. 10.

Envelopes must be addressed "Single Member District 3 Vacancy" care of Board President Ed Garza, 141 Lavaca St., 78210. Those mailed must be postmarked by midnight on that date while hand delivered letters must be received no later than 4:30 p.m.

District 3 is being vacated by Carlos Villarreal,

whose resignation is effective Jan. 31.

School Board members will conduct interviews on Monday, Feb. 13, and if necessary the following Monday, Feb. 20, when the candidate of their choice will be approved.

Interviews will be open to the public, but only Trustees will comment or ask questions.

Encompassing primarily the southeastern portion of SAISD, District 3 includes:

- Highlands HS
- Connell MS
- Rogers MS

- Mission Academy
- Ball ES
- Forbes ES
- Foster ES
- Highland Hills ES
- Schenck ES
- Smith ES
- Steele ES
- Stewart ES

For more information and to apply online visit:
www.saisd.net

Thank you, SAISD Trustees!

It was an evening of thanks and farewell as District employees, community members and patrons gathered at a Jan. 17 reception in observance of Texas School Board Recognition Month.

In addition to expressing their appreciation to SAISD's hard-working and dedicated elected officials, guests also had the opportunity to honor outgoing District 3 Trustee Carlos Villarreal for his tenure.

The retired SAISD employee is stepping down from the School Board effective Jan. 31 after serving since 2004.

The evening also marked another change. President Elect Ed Garza officially assumed the presidency at the regular monthly meeting that followed the reception.



District 4 Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Adkisson presents outgoing SAISD District 3 Trustee Carlos Villarreal with a certificate of congratulations.



New School Board President Ed Garza acknowledges James Howard for his leadership. The District 2 Trustee had served as president since May 2008.



Thanking School Board Vice President Rubén D. Cuero for his service are Council of PTAs officers (l to r) Anthony Herrera, area 1 vice president, Joyce Marie Williams, vice president, Elaine E. Mahler, president and Sandra Meza, secretary. Joining them are Dr. Robert J. Durón and Jefferson HS principal Joanne Cockrell.



School Board Secretary Olga M. Hernandez accepts flowers from Edison HS principal Charles Muñoz.



Pining a corsage on School Board Assistant Secretary Adela R. Segovia is Burbank HS principal Mona Lopez.



Bearing gifts of flowers and a customized thank you card - courtesy of the Lanier HS print shop - for District 5 Trustee Patti Radle is principal Miguel Elizondo.

Districtwide time and attendance system to be implemented

SAISD is one of the few remaining large companies that keep track of time manually.

For years, clerks at the campuses and departments have had to fill out time sheets by hand. Besides taking up valuable time for many employees, this frequently leads to a delay in supplemental pay.

This past November Trustees

approved staff recommendation to implement a time and attendance system.

The Transportation Department – which already has been using one – has volunteered to be the first on the new system.

For the past several years it has been keeping track of driver time by using time clocks.

While the final implementation schedule and order has not been finalized, Central Office departments will precede campuses.

Eventually, the system will be used at every District location.

How time will be tracked will depend upon the

employee. Those who use computers daily will clock in online. Employees who travel campus to campus may use a mobile phone application, while some may use the traditional time clock at their location.

System implementation will be discussed in future consultations and meetings with other employee groups to gather input and address concerns.

The ultimate goal is part of strategies to move SAISD forward and to become more efficient.



Think Safety!

How to prevent those dangerous and costly slips, trips and falls

Yes, accidents do happen. But that does not necessarily mean we are powerless to stop them from occurring.

Instead, most can be prevented with general precautions and safety measures.

In this issue of Think Safety we address one of the most common accidents: STFs, aka, slips, trips and falls.

How STFs occur

Both slips and trips result from some kind of unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground or walking surface.

This shows that good housekeeping, quality of walking surfaces, selection of proper footwear, appropriate pace of walking and being aware of your surroundings are critical for preventing falls.

Common causes of STFs

- Clutter

- Electrical cords
- Greasy and/or polished floors
- Ice
- Loose flooring, carpeting or irregular surfaces such as gravel, shifting floor tiles, and uneven sidewalks
- Open desk drawers and filing cabinets
- Not paying attention
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Wet spots

'Steps' to remember

Practicing the following can help prevent STFs:

- Always pay attention
- Good housekeeping
- Hold on to handrails
- Keep walkways clear
- Report hazards
- Wear proper footwear

The hard facts on STFs

At SAISD, STFs comprise the No. 1 cause of injuries.

Not only painful physically, they also hurt the pocketbook as well. In general, millions of dollars go toward workers' compensation that could be better spent elsewhere.

Because STFs can result in serious outcomes and great cost to both the worker and employer, they literally can be compared to stepping on money.

We can help

More than 3,000 SAISD employees have armed themselves against STFs with safety training. Stay tuned for news on future opportunities to take this important course.



in the Spotlight

Courtesy photo



Academic decathletes return to state tourney

For the second straight year Sam Houston HS students will represent SAISD at the Texas Academic Decathlon where they will compete among small schools Feb. 23-26 at San Antonio College. Team members qualified to advance to this level of competition by virtue of their performance at the Jan. 20-21 regional competition. They are (standing, l to r) Andranique Green, coach Veronica Marines, Carmen Maldonado and coach Kathleen Sadler. Also, (sitting, l to r) Bria Webb, Mariah Scott, Ondrejia Scott, Jasmine Hawkins, Josue Tovar, Jose Ramirez and Deanna Martinez. This year's theme is European Imperialism.



Score one for literacy

Thanks to the "Stick with Reading" program, Washington ES students are beneficiaries of 1,000 books courtesy of the San Antonio Rampage and the UPS Stores of Greater San Antonio. Book drives sponsored by the organizations yielded the reading materials that were hand delivered by UPS employees, American Hockey League players James Wright (left), Mike Vernace and team mascot T-Bone. Principal Phyllis Foley-Davis (far right) was among those accepting the books.



Courtesy photo

The 'X' factor

Sharing their expertise with educators throughout the Lone Star State were Lanier HS SkillsUSA students (l to r) Joseph Garcia, Melody Hernandez and Joe Pena. The teens and Lanier's Criminal Justice students were presenters at the Jan. 21 Mid-Winter Trade and Industrial Vocational Association Conference at the Omni Hotel at the Colonnade. Presentations were Teach Beyond the "X," which is designed to show teachers how they can help get their students excited about learning, and their nationally award-winning anti-bullying campaign. These are among several programs Lanier students are presenting to educators and their peers this school year. Their teacher, not shown, is Tamara Ford.



Courtesy photo


Investing in education

Lanier HS Banking and Finance Magnet students and District officials, along with representatives from the Alamo Federal Credit Union and San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, celebrate the grand re-opening of the Voks branch as a totally student-run facility. Since the campus-based branch's opening in 2008, student workers had been overseen by an AFCU employee. Shown at the ribbon (l to r) are District 5 Trustee Patti Radle, student Brandon Mojica, principal Miguel Elizondo, Dr. Robert J. Durón and District 2 Trustee James Howard.



Prescription for success

Rogers MS 7th-graders (l to r) Ashley Fierra and Tiffani Vargas are so excited about preparing for higher education and a possible career in the medical field they have made a game of it. During the recent Districtwide AVID Expo they and their teacher Ernest Guerrero demonstrated their Q&A board based on the TV game show Jeopardy. They were among some 300 participants at the expo showcasing the Advancement Via Individual Determination college-readiness program.


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Austin encore

Members of the Jefferson HS Lassos and Wranglers Dance Team (shown here during a December performance at the Bob Bullock Texas History Museum) are set to return to the Texas capital to entertain State Board of Education members. The legendary rope twirlers were invited to perform at the board's Jan. 27 meeting. A display of their – along with their school's – memorabilia recently was featured in the museum's "Texas High School Football: More Than the Game" exhibit. Lassos and Wranglers dance team director (not shown) is Nancy Howell.

