2019 ACSA Every Child Counts Symposium

The Achievement Initiative

Going beyond the MTSS model of intervention to reduce disproportionality and close the achievement gap.
Let’s get to know each other

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  Supervisor of Child Welfare & Attendance, Sanger Unified School District
  Adjunct Faculty, California State University Fresno, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

• **Erica Peterson**
  National Education Manager
  School Innovations & Achievement
This is how **A2A works**

### ATTENDANCE TRACKING AND LETTER MANAGEMENT
- System automatically queues-up eligible truant students
- **A2A mails out 6 different attendance intervention letters:**
  - Letters look like they come from principals, their signature, their school logo
  - **3 unexcused, 2 excused and 1 conference notice**
  - In English and the students home language (up to 30 languages)

### MANAGE STUDENT CONFERENCING
- System automatically queues-up eligible truant students
- **A2A mails out 1 conference notification**
- 1 place to monitor and track progress
- Auto scheduler
- Bulk or single-student actions
- No Kids slip through our net!

### DISTRICT OVERSIGHT WITH LOCAL CONTROL
- District staff can see what’s going on in all schools in real time
- Can flag chronically absent students
- Advanced report features
- If the school site doesn’t want a letter to go out, they simply click a box
Our Demographics

- **11,702** Enrollment and growing
  - 70% Hispanic or Latino
  - 15% White
  - 10% Asian

- **82%** High Needs (Low Income, ELL, or Foster Youth)

- **96.2%** Average Daily Attendance, **6.1%** Chronic Absence
  - EL = 95.91%, CA 5.2%
  - SPED = 94.07%, CA 12.9%
  - Foster% 96.7, CA 7.2%
  - Homeless= 92.3%, CA 20%

- **94.3%** Graduation Rate (Increased by 2.1%, 96% for all)
  - 91.7% Hispanic
  - 90.9% African American
  - 96.5% Low income

- **0.9%** Cohort dropout rate
We are always charged with improving *something*, what are some things that come to mind?
We are always charged with improving something

- Increase graduation rates
- Reduce dropouts
- Increase ADA
- Improve test scores
- Increase learning time
- Lower truancy

- Decrease chronic absenteeism
- Increase parental involvement
- Improve student achievement
- Decrease tardies
- Increase revenue
What do all of these things have in common?

• They are measurable
• Someone is supposed to oversee them
• There are personnel assigned to work on them
• There’s a process of some kind in place
• We hear about them at some frequency
• The objective is to get better
Sanger USD’s Story
Sanger USD – What we were up against

• High Poverty / Low Performing
• Growing/Changing Demographics
• Effective Board of Trustees
• Questionable Culture of Expectation
• Focus On Learning?
• Achievement Gap - YUP!
• Facing Economic Challenges
• Looking for Relief – Increased ADA
The Sanger Story

• We knew what attendance was but it was not a focus
• Everything was manually generated
• Part time attendance clerks placed at each school site
• Each school was provided with attendance incentive budgets
• Looked at it as a district effort
• Reported on at every leadership meeting
• Business department came up with visual representation
• All schools were included
The Sanger Story

• Budget Reduction Plan
  – Revenue Enhancement
  – Target increase ADA by .5% = $160,000

• Investment in Student Learning
  – Increase instructional time by .5% 27,000,000 min over the school year.

• Supportive Learning Environment: Being a program improvement district was looked at as an opportunity.

• Attention2Attendance Board Report and Online Monitoring:
  – Services Available
  – Benefits

• Investment in A2A Services
The degree to which we **pay attention and are deliberate** about those things is directly related to how successful we will be in improving performance.
In business, the facts of life can be brutal...

- Grow revenue or die
- While costs go up every year - prices cannot
- Continuous improvement is the only way to stay in business
As a result, one of our core competencies must be improving performance
A Business-Education Partnership
—Producing Incredible Results—

• Nine years ago, we formed this partnership with Attention2Attendance (A2A) to create a culture of achievement starting with “showing up”

• Our objective is to increase learning time and build connections between students, families and their school

• With our partnership, Attention2Attendance takes on the administrative work so our schools can focus on the real work – engaging students and increasing parental involvement

• With our strategic plan, we are ahead of the game when it comes to pupil engagement and school climate

• Staff is engaged and united in a consistent process, which is the reason why more students are coming to school
So, today we are going to let you in on some of our ‘secrets’
5 + 1
Principles for Improving Performance

1. Process
2. People
3. Measurement
4. Oversight
5. Communication

Plus 1 Leadership
• Why would this be one of the principles needed for continuous improvement?

• What would be the considerations (need to include) when thinking about (fill in principle)
Let me share our thoughts on each of our principles
Process

• Systemic problems require enterprise solutions/processes.
• Enterprise solutions are designed to improve proficiency and productivity while providing employees with a satisfying user experience.
• Enterprise solutions are able to provide data and comparative analysis in order to inform appropriate decision and action.
• Effectively changing processes can lead the way to behavioral/cultural change
• Training is not going to solve all problems
  – Train, Job Aids, Ongoing support
Sanger Attendance Supports & Interventions

**Tier 1**
*School Site SARB meeting with school/district support providers* *Individual Student Attendance Improvement plan* *Attendance Groups/Individualized Supports* *Home Visits* *Preset review meetings 30 days* *Referral to Care Team if appropriate*

**Tier 2**
*Individual calls to parents from school employee* *Case reviews to determine if additional support is needed* *Attendance groups* *Attendance group rewards*

**Tier 3**
*Perfect attendance awards* *Most improved attendance awards* *Family attendance awards* *Classroom competitions* *100% attendance school award days* *Random swag drawing days (must be present to win)* *Monthly perfect attendance drawing* *Monthly school site targets* *Teacher awards* *Parent education classes*
“Ideas are easy. It is the execution of ideas that separates the sheep from the goats.”

— Sue Grafton
People

• What we know about people:
  – People have choices on what to work on
  – People move toward pleasure and away from pain
• Make what you want done easy to do, meaningful and appreciate and recognize those that are doing the work
• What do employees want:
  – Appreciation and to be part of the process
  – The people doing the work know the problems and solutions – ask them
• Use their feedback to perfect your product and processes
• Recognize performance
• Communicate, communicate, communicate
School Attendance Review Team Conferences

• Conferencing is crucial to successfully changing your culture to one of “showing up.” We schedule a parent conference after the 2nd truancy notification.

• Districts who actively engage their parents in meetings and conversations about attendance see better results.

• At Sanger, 72% of all school attendance meetings with families have been addressed (i.e., scheduled or closed).

• Take back to your team:
  – What is our conferencing process?
  – Who is involved at the school level?
  – How many attempts do we make to hold the meeting?
  – How is the conversation structured?
Conferencing is crucial to successfully changing your culture to one of “showing up.”

To Be Scheduled | Conf. Addressed (In Progress + Closed) | In-Progress | Closed

- 28.1%
- 71.9%
- 5.5%
- 66.4%

611 out of 2,175 conferences
1,564 out of 2,175 conferences
119 out of 2,175 conferences
1,445 out of 2,175 conferences

Data as of 6/14/2018
# 2017-18 Conferencing Summary, by Site Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Site Type</th>
<th>To Be Scheduled</th>
<th>Conferences Addressed</th>
<th>In-Progress</th>
<th>Closed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (979 conferences)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School (365 conferences)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School (753 conferences)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districtwide</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Data as of 6/14/2018

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Absences 6 weeks prior to conference

Absences 6 weeks after conference

* Each week represents 5 instructional days. Data does not always represent calendar weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Improvement Rate</th>
<th>Total Conferences (Closed &amp; Conducted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days Missed</td>
<td>1,301</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>537</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Days Missed per Student</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.63</td>
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Measurement

• Consistent/Understandable
  – Decide what you are measuring and keep measuring it the same way
  – If everyone doesn’t understand how numbers are being used or what they mean – here’s a guarantee - nothing will happen

• Timely
  – Old data makes us focus on the past rather than the future

• Comparative
  – Absolute numbers mean absolutely nothing
  – Compare to something – last year/goal/similar groups/different groups

• Actionable
  – Aggregated data hides all kinds of inequities
  – If numbers do not speak to you, what are you looking at?
  – Must cause you to act – to do something
2017-18 District Absence Rates Compared to Other A2A Clients

The lower, the better.

- Missed 3+ full days of unexcused absences.
- Missed 7+ full days of excused absences.
- Missed 10% or more for unexcused absences.
- Missed 10% or more for all absences.

Data as of 6/8/2018
• 67.38% (7,976) of your students fall in the Excellent and Satisfactory groups.
• 32.62% (3,862) of your students have missed more than 9.0 days of school.
Chronically Absent - A student who is absent for 10% or more of the school year due to all absences.

Data as of 6/8/2018
### Chronic Rates By Grade: Year-over-Year

The lower, the better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KG</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>12</td>
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2015-16 Districtwide Average: 4.6%
2016-17 Districtwide Average: 8.2%
2017-18 Districtwide Average: 9.1%

**Chronically Absent** - A student who is absent for 10% or more of the school year due to all absences.

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Oversight

• If I am working on something that no one ever looks at but me – it must not be that important

• “Expect what you inspect”
  – People do what you inspect, not what you expect

• How do you know? *(ask yourself)*
  – How do you know what is being done?
  – How do you know it’s being done on a consistent & timely manner?
  – How do you know when something is working?
  – How do you know when something isn’t working?
  – How can you identify or fix problems?

• Analyze patterns, trends – improving performance means changing trend lines
# Total Absence Calendar

## 2017-18 District-wide

### District: Sanger Unified (Fresno)

**Fiscal Year: 2017-18**

**Report Run Date:** 06/25/2018

**Attendance Codes Used:** ;CUT, EXC, Ill, ISI, PBI, RSE, RSU, SUS, UNV, UNX, WDN

**NOTE:** All numbers are based on the Equivalent Day.

### Average Daily Absence

- **District Total:** Average Daily Absence - 532
- **Well Below Avg:** < 458
- **Well Above Avg:** > 606

### Calendar for Selected Months:

#### July 2017

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“Without execution, ‘vision’ is just another word for hallucination.”

— Mark V. Hurd
Communication

• Design a specific well-crafted message
  – Make it clear, relevant and memorable - short sentences, use bullets

• Be consistent, be consistent, be consistent. People will argue that it’s boring- nonsense!
  – Use the same design look and the same message every time and people will start to identify with you immediately
  – It takes 4 times of seeing or hearing a message before someone begins to recall, “I may have seen this before.”
  – 4 times just to recall – not “I’ve seen this before and maybe I should pay attention to it.”

• Branding – there is a reason companies spend so much money on their brand – shortcut to long messages

• Always communicate the outcomes
  – No one wants to be asked and then never receive any feedback on what happened
What appropriate communication numbers look like

• **On average you should send:**
  – Elementary SD about 20% of enrollment get a 1\textsuperscript{st} truancy letter
  – K-12 SD about 40% of enrollment get a 1\textsuperscript{st} truancy letter
    • 10,000 students = 4,000 notifications to families
  – High SD about 60% of enrollment get a 1\textsuperscript{st} truancy letter

• **Take back to your team:**
  – How many truancy notices did vs. should you send?
  – How many *total* communications did vs. should you send?
  – What happens to the families we don’t communicate with?
Increased Parent Communication & Engagement

Series of Truancy, Excessive Excused Absences and Conference Notifications informing parents of the importance of regular school attendance.

17,921 parent communication pieces sent in 2018

4,117 First Truancy Notification Letters

2,175 Second Truancy Notification Letters

561 Third Truancy Notification Letters

847 Chronic Letters

3,963 Excessive Excused Absence I Letters

1,590 Excessive Excused Absence II Letters

3,489 Email Notifications

1,179 Conference Notifications

1,280 average letters per run (or every two weeks): 14 total letter runs to date

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Leadership

Continuous improvement does not happen without *someone caring deeply* about the desired outcome

One definition of Leadership:

“The art of accomplishing more than the science of management thinks is possible”
Leadership

• What’s required
  – Being relentless about the other 5 principles we’ve discussed
  – Demonstrating passion about why what the leader is trying to improve
  – Inspiring others to believe
  – Listening
  – Sharing credit for successes

• But sometimes it’s true that the leader’s will to succeed is the most important thing.
Sanger USD Graduation Data

The higher, the better.


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Sanger USD Dropout Data

The lower, the better.


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Principles for Improving Performance

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Plus 1 Leadership
Thank You

**Dr. Dennis Wiechmann**
Supervisor of Child Welfare & Attendance, Sanger Unified School District
Adjunct Faculty, California State University Fresno, Department of
Curriculum and Instruction

**Erica Peterson**
National Education Manager
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