Instead of making decisions at the top and expecting everyone to be on board, Rhett says she tries to take care in sitting down with everybody and letting folks at the school-level be a part of the discussion. When holding transparent discussions about the district’s budget, she gives as an example, you can’t just say ‘we have a budget and here’s what we’re spending it on.’ Instead, it’s important to explain what the budget is, and seek out what school sites need, their goals, and then determine how money can be spent to best address them. That type of decision-making is how Arvin Union came to determine that it needed help improving student attendance before it could boost academic outcomes. The district partnered with School Innovations & Achievement (SI&A) to implement the Achievement Initiative featuring Attention2Attendance (A2A).

The early warning and intervention system tracks student attendance and sends letters home to families when their child is trending toward becoming chronically absent—opening up yet another form of communication between Rhett and members of the school community.

“It’s a small district, so we all pick up little pieces...”
Georgia Rhett, Superintendent

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“I couldn’t agree more with Superintendent Rhett,” says Susan Cook, COO and Leadership Coach at SI&A. “Credibility is central to leadership. ‘I can’t hear what you say, what you do speaks too loudly’ is the refrain that values-based leaders implicitly understand.”

That sort of values-based open communication and teamwork is something Rhett says she is always working to perfect, and it appears that practice is paying off.

Whereas individual school sites were once so competitive about beating one another’s test scores that they were hesitant to share information with each other, Rhett says everyone has been really working hard to share insights as to what’s working and to emphasize how all of the sites are on the same side: the students’.