

Quick Takes **Colleague Corner** **Chronic Absenteeism**

Dr. Andrew Buchheit, Principal
T. Clay Wood Elementary
Prince William County Public Schools

With virtual learners, number one is the relationship teachers are developing or have developed with their students. This relationship along with engaging instruction continues to bring our students back to the Live Virtual Instruction. Second, we all work together - teachers, counselors, administration, office staff - to follow up with students not attending regularly or who are out for more than a day to ensure we are not letting anyone slip under the radar.

Dr. Marcus J. Carey, Principal
Edward W. Wyatt Middle School
Greensville County Public Schools

One of the ways we are combating chronic absenteeism at E. W. Wyatt Middle School is by conducting home visits, making robocalls, and initiating incentives for students who attend school on a regular basis. Teachers are tasked with making sure we monitor all students who miss two consecutive days from school, and my team "hit the streets" to target those students. I am finding that many of our students have been displaced due to Covid-19 and in many cases, these students do not have a safe space to work. Very unfortunate, but a reality. Our team is pushing grace over grades and having conversations with parents, in an effort to let them know we are in this together and by working together, we can accomplish so much more.

Karin G. Castillo-Rose, Principal
Henrico High School
Henrico County Public Schools

As for attendance, our work has been tweaked and honed to address our new virtual setting. We have tackled attendance by breaking it up into two areas, Community Building and Procedures. Community Building is our attempt at building and maintaining a sense of belonging at school; after all, to help attendance, students should want to be at school and feel they are part of a family and community that is looking out for them. Strategies include finding multiple ways of keeping them engaged with continuous communication through social media, Schoology, video morning announcements and lots of emails to students and parents. We also utilize an Attendance Re-engagement team. They communicate with students that fall within our parameters of needing re-engagement. They work with them as case managers to assist with

communication with all stakeholders, access to resources, and as motivators and mentors. We also continue to engage in spirit weeks, school swag rewards, shout outs, celebrations of special events and push for participation in extracurricular activities even in the virtual setting. It is our goal to keep our community connected and engaged.

While virtual learning has created many challenges to education, I believe it has created the opportunity for schools to rethink their engagement with their communities and their hardest to reach students. These new strategies will be crucial when tackling attendance whenever we return to "normal".

Dr. Christopher M. Jones, Principal
Thomas Dale High School
Chesterfield County Public Schools

Our work in regards to chronic absenteeism is to redesign the high school experience around the unique needs, strengths, and goals of students. Creating an environment that draws students in and sets the conditions for students to invest is the preventative measures we are taking. Sifting through and staring at "post-mortem" data AFTER the students have missed school only keeps us in a cycle of reacting to our deficits. We KNOW, every single one of us in education, why students don't come to school; yet, the battle to re-create what school IS for students continues. Within the constraints of the system, our school improvement plan seeks a student-centered proactive approach to creating the school EACH of our students needs and deserves.

These are our 5 levers to create a unique experience for EACH student. Of course, with 2,500 of them, it is sure not to work as designed for every single one. We use two key pieces of data to monitor closely and utilize our [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#) to intervene as needed.

- [Positive, Healthy, and Joyful School Culture](#)
- [Collaborative Processes for School Improvement](#)
- [High-Quality Instruction](#)
- [Student Voice and Leadership](#)
- [Family and Community Engagement](#)