

MAKING AN IMPACT

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WELCOME

In our first issue of the year we chose to highlight some best practices and new programs that AISD elementary, middle, and high schools are implementing or have implemented. Each of these stories focuses on impacting students through different methods. Whether by addressing attendance, conquering behavior issues or focusing on academics we can all benefit from these wonderful efforts. Keep up the good work!

DOBIE GIRL TALK GROUP PROVIDES MUCH NEEDED GIRL POWER

For the students at Dobie Middle School girl power now comes from their own peers with the help of a weekly group called Girl Talk.

The group which consists of 25 female students from grades 6-8 was created last fall by Dropout Prevention Specialist, Christina Villarreal.

Villarreal said she saw the group as a great way to connect with the female students at her school.

"I felt that the group would help me to better reach the students who needed more guidance and who might be potential dropouts," she said.

Since its inception last fall, word of mouth about the group has spread fast. At the beginning of the school year there was an overwhelming

demand from students at Dobie who wanted to sign up for the group.

Despite its popularity Villarreal said the group continues to focus on being a resource for the girls and helps to teach them important life skills.

"Now when my girls are about to get in a fight or are having difficulties with others they come to my office first before they get in trouble."

-Christina Villarreal

The group meets every Friday during advisory period to discuss topics such as academics, cultural diversity, goal setting, how to deal with peer pressure and most recently making the

right choices.

For this particular exercise the students took turns sitting in a 'hot seat' (recliner chair) at the front of the room and answered questions about decision making and responsibility. The questions ranged from whose decision it is to graduate from school to who decides the kind of music they should listen to.

Villarreal said that for the girls in the group this format gives them a great opportunity to work on solutions to such issues as a team and in a safe environment and that's empowering.

Many of the girls said that they liked the group because it was both interesting and fun, while others added that they look forward to coming to school on Fridays because of Girl Talk.

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REAGAN CALLS FOR STUDENT ROUNDUP

At Reagan High School tackling attendance issues has become a family affair.

Through the guidance of Larry Johnson the school's parent support specialist, Reagan is having attendance roundup workshops to in-

form students about the consequences of skipping school.

These events originally focused on the senior classmen who had excessive absences, but are now being geared at also bringing

together family members to make up for their absences at the same time.

Johnson said he got the idea for the workshop from thinking about how he could help the parents of his students.

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REMARKS

BY DR LINELLE CLARK-BROWN

Making a positive impact on student attendance, academics, and behaviors often requires thinking outside of the box. This newsletter illustrates a few examples of campus Impact Team members who are doing just that---- Thinking outside the box. I will continue to share best practices in future newsletters and on the Dropout Prevention electronic library so that we can continue to learn from each other. I look forward to our journey towards excellence in serving the needs of students and families.

With much respect and admiration----Linelle Clark-Brown

"The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read & write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" Alvin Toffler



If you have a question for Dr Clark-Brown please contact her office at (512) 414-0201 or through email at lclarkbr@austinisd.org

WALNUT CREEK "BUDDY SYSTEM" HELPING STUDENTS BECOME LEADERS

Mentoring a student in their early school years can make a world of difference in how they continue to grow academically as well as their likelihood to stay in school for many years to come.

At Walnut Creek Elementary this philosophy is spearheading an effort to implement and potentially expand a "buddy program" of older children helping younger children to succeed in school.

The program was started as a result of a transfer student who had joined Walnut Creek after the school year began and needed some additional assistance with learning about the school's policies, rules and expectations. Because the student had not been enrolled in the school from the beginning they were constantly falling behind on the academic material.

Assistant Principal Yolanda Peralez-Hernandez and second grade teacher Rosela Heronimus found an older student who could help this child in the mornings prior to school and this allowed the child to catch up. "I think when you are able to help a student even just for 15 minutes it really helps set their mood for the day," Heronimus said.

The buddy program has now expanded and has two sets of 5th graders who meet for a half hour before school to help the younger elementary students with their reading as well as with any other academic support they may need.

"I think when you are able to help a student even just for 15 minutes it really helps set their mood for the day."

-Rosela Heronimus

"This is the beginning of what could be something comparable to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs," she said. "Having a positive role model is extremely important to the students."

Heronimus said that that being a buddy for a child is a very positive way for a student to help others in their school. "It really builds upon an older student and I can see how it would certainly bring out the best for the both of them," she said.

Heronimus said that she has noticed that kids really do learn from other children.

"If the older child respects where the younger child is coming from and takes on that responsibility, then they can really learn from one another," she said. "Because they are both benefiting from the experience, that also starts to create more and more of a desire to want to be here at school on time and have more of an interest in learning."

Heronimus said the program may not seem successful initially, but it does set a tone of 'I can do this' and once a child starts feeling positive about what they can do, success starts feeling good.

Because the buddy program is putting the Walnut Creek's brightest kids to work, Heronimus said she believes it is a step in the right direction.

"I would like to see the program grow...I think it is an opportunity for our kids to become leaders and positive role models for others, it's really a win-win situation for everyone."

Office of Dropout Prevention/Reduction
 Dr Linelle Clark-Brown -Coordinator
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For questions about this issue or suggestions for our next Impact Newsletter please contact Jalima (Holly) Subervi
 Phone: (512) 414-0322
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Check us out on the Web!

http://aisdweb/education/ed_support/dropout/

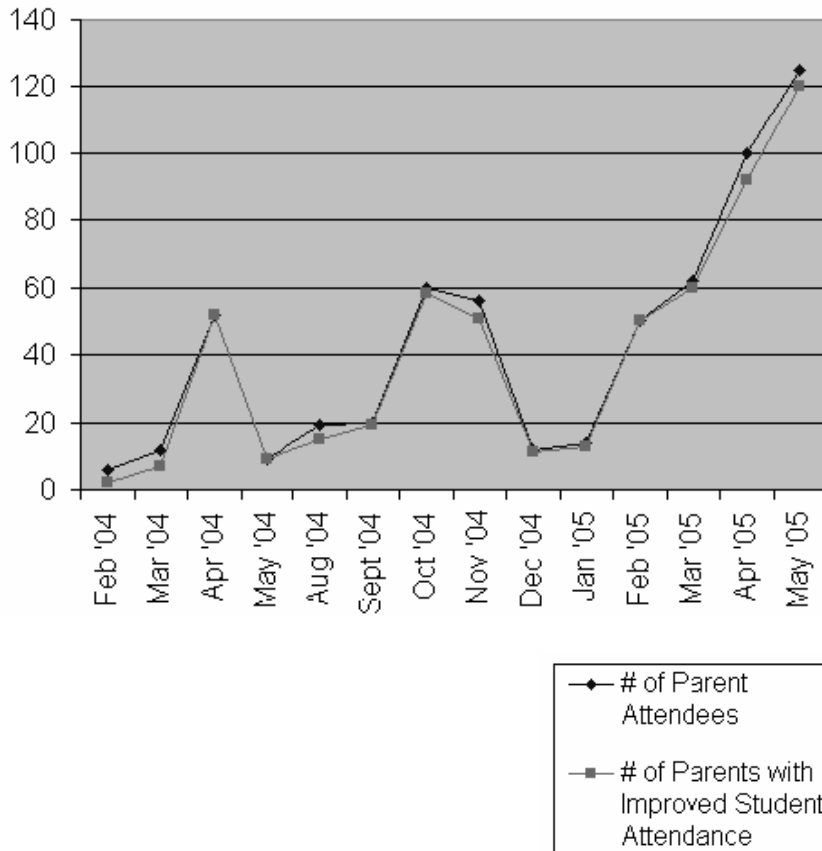
Upcoming Events 2006

- ⇒ **Striking the Balance**
 Dignity Rights & Diversity Training
 Date: April 7, 2006
 Location: Carver Museum
- ⇒ **18th Annual National Dropout Prevention Conference**
 Date: October 21-25, 2006
 Location: San Antonio (stay tuned for more details)
- ⇒ **Taking Care of Business Class**
 Date: Tuesdays and Thursdays
 (See page 4 for dates and registration information)
 Location: AISD Family Resource Center
 Allan Elementary School Annex

HELPFUL RESOURCES

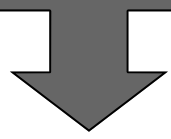
- ⇒ **Austin ISD Board Policy Manual:**
<http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/227901/>
- ⇒ **Austin ISD Online Library:**
<http://aisdweb/admin/library.php?submit=Library>
- ⇒ **Dropout and Prevention Online Library**
http://aisdweb/education/ed_support/dropout/index.phtml?opt=library_list
- ⇒ **Easter Seals Family Resource Guide:**
<http://www.centraltx.easterseals.com>
- ⇒ **Intervention Central Resource Website:**
<http://www.interventioncentral.org/>
- ⇒ **Texas Statutes Education Code:**
<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/ed.toc.htm>

Taking Care of Business Class
City of Austin Municipal Court in collaboration with AISD
Overall Efficiency
February 2004 - May 2005



(Note: The collaboration between the City of Austin Municipal Court and the Austin Independent District has been one of great success. Since February, 2004, there have been 850 elementary cases filed with 600 resulting in a court order to attend the Taking Care of Business Class. Of the 70% who were court ordered to attend, 96% have shown an improvement in overall attendance, proving that this partnership is very beneficial. Of the remaining 30%, it is unclear as to how many plead not guilty, had a warrant issued, or simply voluntarily attended this class. Future data collection will specify these differences in order to gain a clearer picture of the overall success of this partnership.)

**TAKING CARE OF
 BUSINESS CLASS
 DATES**



Tuesday's
 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
 • April 18
 • May 16

Thursday's
 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
 • April 27
 • May 25

Registration is Required-
 contact Pam Wade
 (512) 414-3485

Who Should Attend:
 Parents/ Guardians of
 Elementary Student(s)
 contacted about unexcused
 absences or (Tardy-student(s)
 arriving to school late or leaving
 before the end of the school day)

DOBIE TEAM HELPS TRANSITION STUDENTS FROM ALC

Returning to school after being sent to the Alternative Learning Center can be a difficult transition for many students who have not learned to change their behaviors or who may feel they have been forgotten.

However, for the students at Dobie Middle School this process just got a little bit smoother. This is due to a new ALC transition plan developed by several members from the school's Impact team (Christina Villarreal, Kate Amerson, Katie Parker, Joseph Diaz, Marisa Zappone) which aims to provide students with support and guidance during their stay at ALC as well as upon their return to school.

School Community Liaison, Kate Amerson said the transition plan is geared toward reaching out to the student while they are at ALC, working to change their behaviors, finding a resource/advocate back at the school and helping them make a smooth transition back to school.

"I think this plan will impact all of the students because they will have a support system and it will help them problem-solve and hopefully attendance may improve," Amerson said.

While the new transition plan will not be mandated, it will be presented to the Dobie faculty and they will be invited to participate.

Amerson said the faculty including teachers are invited to take on any role they want.

"Some teachers are really invested in their students. We've had teachers do outreach to their students in the past, and a few have even gone on home visits," Amerson said.

The transition plan which launched in March, is using the resources that Dobie already has in place which include The Impact and Communities in Schools to create a large team of support for the students.

"We are working through the Impact Team because Impact is our form of communication to stay in touch about what is happening with the ALC students," Amerson said.

Amerson adds that the plan has gone from being a more external program and has grown into something the whole school has adopted.

"Everyone is taking ownership for these kids now; this is a really powerful thing," she said.

See column on the right for more details about the Dobie ALC transition plan

Steps of ALC Transition Plan

Student is sent to Alternative Learning Center



Visitor from home campus will visit student at ALC twice a month to provide support



Student fills out letter to choose an advocate from school that they will use for support and as a resource



While student is at ALC, the transition team meets to discuss discipline and how to help the student upon their return to school.

REAGAN TACKLES ATTENDANCE

Continued from Page 1)

By working with other schools Johnson is arranging for students from Reagan to bring their sibling who may be in elementary or middle school and have the workshop count for all of them.

"This helps to make it convenient for the parents and helps the family stay together, so they can meet at one place, since its kind of hard to go to the high school and the junior high when they have more than one child with absences to make up," he said.

The first attendance workshop was held in February and more are being planned to teach students about the importance of attendance.

Future workshops will allow parents to participate and will address all aspects of going to court including the fines and how it affects their pocketbook. Johnson said he

"We are trying to work with these students by trying to inform them, but we are also trying to give them classes and things to help them improve their attendance."

-Larry Johnson

hopes this will help improve the attendance of those students with excessive absences, because it offers them an alternative to just going to court.

"We are trying to work with these students by trying to inform them about attendance requirements, but we are also trying to give them classes and

things to help them improve their attendance," Johnson said.

Last semester Johnson had all the students from the government classes at Reagan on attendance contracts.

As a result of that effort the classes had 90% improvement in attendance.

Johnson said he is hoping these attendance roundup workshops will have the same effect in keeping students accountable, as they become more informed about the consequences of missing school.

DOBIE GIRL TALK GROUP PROVIDES MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT

(Continued from Page 1)

Besides helping the girls deal with peer pressure, the group has also been instrumental in helping them face and conquer their behavior problems.

“Now when my girls are about to get in a fight or are having difficulties with others they come to my office first before they get in trouble,” Villarreal said.

This port has many of students to as a reliable thy re- “When the tough have them problem or work-

“It is my hope that the girls can use the activities they’ve learned in Girl Talk as they reflect and make decisions in the years to come.”

-Christina Villarreal

kind of sup- allowed Villarreal’s count on her and trustwor- source. girls are in situations I talk out the work on a sheet,” she said “That helps to take away their anger and frustration and as a result they end up letting the situation go.”



Dropout Specialist Christina Villarreal (left), Parent Support Specialist Maria Hernandez (right corner), and members of Dobie Middle School’s Girl Talk



Members of Dobie Middle School’s Girl Talk group

AISD’s Dropout Prevention/Reduction Office Newsletter

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MAKING AN IMPACT

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To: