Addressing Student Attendance during this Pandemic

Angelica Gutierrez & Alma Alegria-Zamora
from Turlock Unified School District
Turlock Unified School District

- Was established in 1906
- Currently have 15 schools
  - 9 Elementary Schools
  - 2 Middle Schools
  - 2 High Schools
  - 1 Continuation School
  - 1 Independent Study School serving K-12
- Currently 14,000+ students enrolled in the district
- 1,500+ staff serving our students on a daily basis
Preparation for Each School Year

- Attend the California Association of Supervisors of Child Welfare & Attendance (CASCWA) conference
- Attend SARB training through Stanislaus County Office of Education
- Review Attendance Works website
  - Provide insight on suggestions on how to address attendance
  - Receive information on updated practices, policies and research
  - Review resources available (i.e. handouts, trainings, contact numbers)
Preparation for Each School Year

- Meet as a team to establish goals for the year. For example,
  - Review cases from year before
    - Make contact with our families who need it
  - Establish SARB calendar and invite participants
  - Review current contract (SART, DART, and SARB) to ensure they're up to date
  - Review current referrals used by each school site
  - Brainstorming ideas for attendance campaign for the month of September
  - Discuss previous school year to establish the following:
    - What/Who needs our immediate attention?
    - What interventions were successful? What interventions were not successful?
    - Ways to improve communication as a team and with school sites
Truancy Process
Truancy Process

- 1-3 unexcused absences
  - School should be calling home and making contact with parent/caregiver to address absence(s)

- 3 unexcused absences
  - School will mail out first truancy letter identifying student as truant
  - Interventions made by staff need to be documented on Aeries
  - Administration has to be notified of student’s truant status
Truancy Process

- 5 unexcused absences
  - Second letter would be mailed to the parent/guardian advising if absences continue a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting will be scheduled
  - Interventions by staff need to be documented
  - Attendance clerk notifies Student Welfare and Attendance Specialists of student’s truancy
Truancy Process

- 7 unexcused absences
  - Third letter would be mailed to the parent/guardian with a time, date and location of a SART meeting scheduled for the family to address truancy
  - SART team should consist of
    - One administrator and other school personnel
  - SART meeting should
    - Determine cause of truancy
    - Connect families with services needed
    - Sign a contract at the end of the conclusion of the meeting
What happens after a SART meeting is held?

- Attendance clerk and SWAS will monitor student’s attendance
- Follow up with family to ensure they are following the SART directives and connecting with resources provided during meeting
- If absences continue,
  - School must continue to hold interventions at the school site
  - If parent is nonresponsive to interventions, family can be referred to a District Attendance Review Conference (DARC)
    - A DARC meeting is held at the District Office with Director of Student Services
    - DARC meeting address continued issues that have lead to student’s absenteeism
What if *DARC* meeting has been held and student continues to be absent?

- After a *DARC* meeting, if family continues to be unresponsive to interventions being completed by the school or *CWA*, family can be referred to the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB)
Student Review Attendance Board (SARB)
What is *SARB*?

- There are two types of Student Review Attendance Board meetings
  - Turlock Unified *SARB* held by Turlock Unified at the District office
  - Stanislaus County Office of Education (*SCOE*) *SARB* held at SCOE office in Modesto, CA
Turlock Unified School District *SARB*

- *SARB* is a multi-agency board that includes representatives from:
  - Director of Student Services
  - Child Welfare and Attendance Specialists
  - An Administrator from Each Grade Level (Elementary, Middle, & High School)
- The *SARB* panel identifies and address barrier(s) that contribute to student’s absenteeism
- Review interventions that have been held by various personnel
- *SARB* panel would make additional recommendations to resources and programs available in the community
- Contract is signed at the conclusion of the meeting
TUSD contracts with SCOE to refer some of our matters

After a family has attended our SARB and attendance has not improved:

- Consult with school administration for support to being SARB through SCOE
- Our support staff will then prepare our SARB application to submit to the county
  - The SARB application includes all interventions completed by staff to see an improvement in attendance
- With SARB notices being delivered in person, we notify Ms. Uma of any safety concerns the officer through the Sheriffs Office will encounter
- Coordinate with Ms. Whitehead to schedule a hearing for the referred family
A SARB meeting through SCOE has been scheduled, now what happens?
Once a date and time has been established, SWAS will inform family of the hearing:
- Emphasize the importance of attending the meeting as failure to show would result in a referral to Truancy Court.
- If family attempts to call to cancel, we make all efforts to avoid a delay in the process.

Notify administration of date and time of meeting if presence is needed.
Stanislaus County Office of Education *SARB*

- During the *SARB* hearing, *SWAS* will present the case to the panel
- *SARB* directives will be assigned at the conclusion of the meeting
- After the *SARB* meeting is held
  - *SWAS* will monitor the case and continue interventions
  - *SWAS* will request violation reports if directives are not being followed
- If lack of compliance continues, district will request Court
Documentation and communication is key throughout the process!
Truancy Court
Truancy Court

- If family has not been following SARB directives, non-responsive to continued interventions, and absenteeism continues, case is referred to Truancy Court
- A court case is requested through the SCOE office
- SWAS requests copies of all paperwork for our files
Truancy Court

● Once a court date has been established:
  ○ Family will also be notified via mail if available
  ○ Family will be notified via telephone by SWAS. During call, SWAS will:
    ■ Encourage family to show improved attendance
    ■ Emphasize the importance of attending the Court hearing
● SWAS will notify administration of hearing date
● SWAS will submit most recent attendance report prior to Court date
● SWAS will remind family of Court hearing 24 hours before to ensure family appears
● Prior to court hearing, SWAS will submit summary to the Court of each student’s performance and recommendation
Truancy Court

- The day of the hearing
  - SWAS appears in front of the judge to provide update on the status of each student
  - SWAS will give recommendations and requests on how family can improve attendance

- At the end of the hearing
  - Family is notified of the next hearing date
  - Family receives copies of Court paperwork

- SWAS and school will continue interventions and working with family until next hearing date
Support Services and Tools
Support Services and Tools

- Turlock Community Collaborative
- Stanislaus County Warm Line (211)
- Community Provider Resource List offered through BHRS
- United Samaritans
- Local Shelters and services
- Organize backpack drives
- McKinney-Vento to assist our homeless and refugee families
Support Services and Tools

- Organize an attendance campaign during the month of September
ATTENDANCE MATTERS

PLEASE HELP ENSURE A POSITIVE START TO YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL DAY BY DROPPING THEM OFF BY 8:30AM. THIS WILL GIVE THEM ENOUGH TIME TO LINE-UP FOR CLASS.

SCHOOL STARTS AT 8:35AM
School gates open at 8 AM
Breakfast served starting at 8 AM

Be Here! Every Day. All Day. All The Way!
Questions or Comments?