

## EVERY DAY MATTERS

# “Every Day Matters and School + You = Success”

By Trish Yerges

The La Grande School District’s Strategic Plan has a goal to reach 94% attendance this year. To achieve this goal, the district has initiated the “Every Day Matters & School Plus You Equals Success,” a communication campaign to disseminate information on why regular attendance is crucial for school success.

Leading the district’s attendance committee overseeing this campaign is Chris Wagner, the vice principal at the Middle School.

The committee is providing the schools with resources to bring the attendance up. Since this is the first year of doing it, the committee set some goals at the

“Right now, we’re just at 92.85% for daily attendance throughout the year for the entire district,” said Wagner. “We would like to be at 94% by the end of the year.”

beginning of the year.

“One thing we share is that it’s hard to do well in school when you aren’t attending regularly. We would like parents to know that regular attendance means 90% attendance or better,” he said. “In other words, for every 10 school days, a kid should not miss more than one day.”

Anyone beneath that percentile is considered not a regular attender and is

considered to have attendance issues.

“We’d like to see everyone at 95% attendance, which is considered good attendance,” he said. “At this point in the year there are about 115 school days, and if that is the case, if you’ve missed more than 11 school days for any reason, then you would be considered chronically absent.”

When a student is chronically absent, then the school considers the student at risk to not be successful at school. “It’s one of the strongest risk factors we look at, both in terms of not learning how to read on time and graduation,” said Wagner. “Students not reading at grade level by the end of the third grade are 18% less likely to graduate.”

The consequences of not attending school regularly includes poorer academic performance and having a hard time staying caught up. “They fall behind which causes them to either go into themselves and hide and don’t ask questions or they have behavior issues because they feel insecure when they don’t know the answers. So it creates a snowball effect on everything else,” said Wagner.

Those not attending

regularly have a hard time connecting with their peers because they’re gone so much that their peers don’t necessarily rely on them to be at school.

“They are not as involved in school, and part of the success in school is to attend, participate, do your best, and get along with people,” said Wagner. “But there’s no way to do very well when you’re not a regular attender at school.”

The Every Day Matters campaign involves using informational propaganda and signs that are placed around the community and displayed on the movie theater screen.

“Basically, we’re trying to get families into this culture of getting up, getting ready, and attending school each day,” said Wagner. “Kids with this culture tend to do

better in school.”

A lot of non-attenders live within the city limits. There is bussing available but for whatever reasons, they don’t catch the bus. If they are within a mile of the school, they are considered in walking distance of the school, yet some choose not to come to school or have some barrier that prevents them from coming.

The attendance secretary plays an important role in connecting with families who have unexcused, absent children. She calls every day to check on their whereabouts and reasons for being absent.

There are four basic categories of reasons why students become non-attenders. The first is barriers, such as health-related issues, poor transportation, trauma in home, lack of

health and dental care, homeless situations or kids living in hotels that struggle to get to school.

The second is the aversion to school---“I won’t go, can’t go”---a mindset sometimes caused by bullying and harassment or feeling unsupported or unwelcomed at school.

The third category is complete disengagement, not having a good relationship at the school. A student may feel they are not getting enough out of school.

A fourth category is a common myth that ‘the only problem with absences is when they are unexcused.’ “That is a myth,” said Wagner. “Every day away from school for whatever reason is a day away from instruction.”

The bottom line is that success in school is directly tied to being a regular attender at school. That’s why the district is working hard toward achieving the ultimate 95% attendance rate.

“We want to work with families and support them to get their kids to school on a regular basis,” said Wagner. “Please contact your school teacher if you have any questions about attendance or see our attendance secretary.”

