



School District of Waukesha



Mary Green, MSW
Licensed School Social Worker

- School Social Worker since 1996
- School District of Waukesha (2014-present)
 - Whittier and Heyer elementary schools (2014-2022)
 - Waukesha South High School (2022-present)
 - School Engagement & Attendance Specialist




March 21, 2024

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**New Position
 Different Approach
 Positive Result**

What: School Engagement & Attendance Specialist
 Where: Waukesha South High School
 How: Grant funded by the United Way for two years
 Why: Assist in the engagement of students and focus on attendance efforts at a large high school with significant needs



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**Collaborative Approach
 Student Focused
 Data Driven**

**2022-2023
 Grade 9**

- Focus on transition to high school
- Engage parents
- Proactive support for students and families
- Crisis/mental health response
- Focus on attendance & incentives as well as school wide systems related to attendance, behavior, etc.

**2023-2024
 Grades 9-10**


- Additional grade level included
- Continued above efforts
- Integrated more as a SSW in building
- Continued focus on attendance & incentives, data review, systems, etc.



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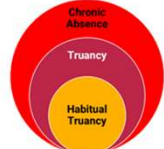
Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Provides transportation for students on an as-needed basis (*almost daily*)
- Support school attendance and school processes related to attendance
- Works collaboratively with student services to:
 - Support student engagement
 - Remove barriers to attendance
 - Connect with parents/guardians and students
- Provides home visits as needed to assess family circumstances and make needed referrals to community resources for problems interfering with the child's academic progress, social, emotional or physical development
- Provides individual counseling and contacts for students to address specific social-emotional needs and engagement, connect with positive adult in the school building
- Review "systems" in the school and regularly review attendance data with the goal to improve engagement and ultimately increase student attendance and success toward graduation
- Problem solve regarding specific areas of concern data is reflecting (e.g., supports for students of color)



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HOW WE VIEW ATTENDANCE: *Need to make a shift*



Students who regularly miss school are:

- More likely to miss early learning milestones
- Less likely to graduate on time
- More likely to drop out of school
- More likely to experience poor outcomes in adulthood

Go from: "Skipping" →

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Everyone Mindset Shifts

From...

- Punitive
- Compliance
- What happens when you *don't* come to school

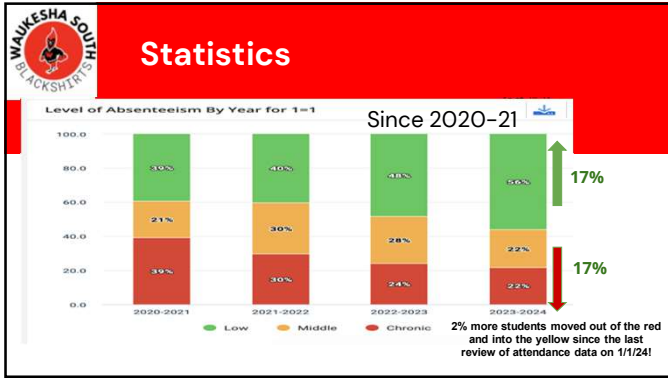
To...

- Positive
- Opportunity to learn
- What happens when you *do* come to school

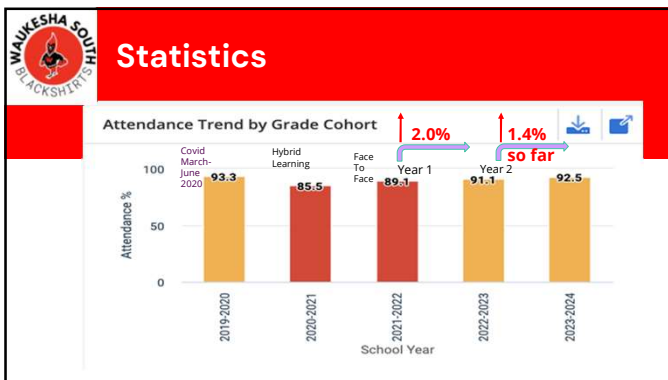


This creates an environment that strengthens family/school partnerships

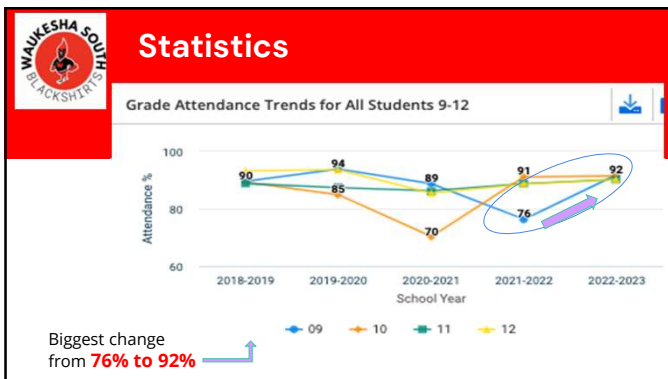
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Important Takeaways from Current Research


- 1** Truancy is stronger indicator of youth **needs** than future delinquent behavior
- 2** Punitive, harsh sanctions are more likely to *increase* the incidence of truancy
- 3** Matching services to identified needs is critical for long-term behavior change
- 4** The most effective truancy reduction efforts are collaborative



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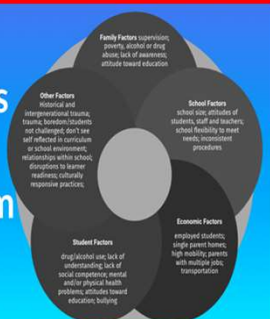
A Current Collaboration Example

School + WCDHHS collaboration



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Risk Factors for Absenteeism




- a. Family
- b. School
- c. Economic
- d. Student
- e. Other

How can we work together as a community to impact these?

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 **Questions?**

Mary Green, School Social Worker Grades 9 & 10
School Engagement & Attendance Specialist
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