

Tribal Attendance Pilot Project (TAPP)

JEFFERSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

WARM SPRINGS K-8 ACADEMY

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Tribal Attendance Pilot Project



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TAPP Objective:

The objective of our TAPP program was two-fold:

1. To work with American Indian/Alaska Native students and families to create a support system and intervention plan for chronically absent students (students missing more than 10% of school days)
2. Establish and rebuild bridges with community partners to provide “wrap-around” support for our students and families

TAPP Action Plan:

- Identify “chronically absent” students (students missing more than 10% of school days)
- Reach out to families regarding attendance awareness and the importance of education, and set regular attendance goals
- Address barriers hindering regular attendance (such as a lack of transportation, safe bus routes, safe walking routes, frequent custody changes, etc.)
- After identifying barriers and setting realistic goals, cultivate and maintain communication between Family Advocates, parents and students
- Strengthening this communication was essential to maintaining attendance goals and improving where necessary
- Create a culture and awareness of regular attendance in the school
- Regularly praise and encourage students about regular attendance and the impact it has on their future
- Create an incentive plan to maintain momentum of the positive atmosphere of attendance
- Establish solid and positive relationships with the students on a daily basis
- Partner with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWS) to create “wrap-around” support for our students
- Maintain the tribal partnerships through regular communication and keeping the common goal of supporting our students throughout the community
- Be available and present whenever possible for students, families, staff, and tribal partners
- Meet where people are: school, homes and in community

Profile of School:

Current Enrollment (as of 05/19/2017):

Total, 665 students are enrolled in Warm Springs K-8 Academy. Of those students:

- 649 or 97.6% identify as American Indian/Alaska Native
- 9 or 1/3% identify as White
- 6 or 0.9% identify as tribally affiliated Hispanic
- 1 or 0.01% identify as tribally affiliated Asian/Pacific Islander

(Data provided per Student Information System at school: Warm Springs K-8 Academy ADA/ADM report)

Graduation Rate:

The overall cohort graduation rate for the Jefferson County School District 509J in the 2015-2016 academic year showed an increase of 3.59% from the 2014-2015 academic year, with graduation rate of 60.29%.

Hispanic/Latino made an 8.03% increase, Students with Disabilities an 18.49% increase, Limited English Proficient a 19.84% increase, and Migrant had a 46.43% increase.

Superintendent Rick Molitor stated: “The area that we need to focus on is our American Indian/Alaska Native graduation rate. We are failing our Native American Students with a decrease in our graduation rate by 3.01% for a total of 38.81% students graduating on time. We have to focus our resources to not only attain our district goal, but to give hope and a positive future for our Native American students. This causes us to look differently on how we are approaching our work with Native American students.”

Communication Plan:

TAPP was regularly advertised through flyer and pamphlet distribution in the school, during school events with family engagement, in the community and in meetings with tribal partners. An introduction letter described the Family Advocate roles. The local radio station conducted and aired interviews about TAPP and our school’s goals. Family Advocates and tribal partners had also distributed attendance information regarding TAPP and attendance awareness (from Attendance Works) in addition to the flyers/pamphlets we made. The Warm Springs K-8 Academy has also promoted our “End of year Attendance Raffle” via email, robo-call, and texts to families. We have also observed word of mouth advertising from parent to parent/family to family about the support we have given to students and their families. Social Media has also been a successful tool in reaching our community with attendance information.

TAPP Efforts:

Through the support of TAPP we have been able to create a positive culture of attendance with the grades we have focused on (K-5). The incentive plans, college banners for perfect attendance, traveling trophy, and the regular positive relationship building with the students has created an awareness that wasn’t formerly as present. The students have responded positively to the efforts being made. The staff have also greatly appreciated the Family Advocate positions and the hard work in getting students to school and offering support to the community.

TAPP Success:

- Reduced number of citations from 14 for the K-4 level last year to one this year
- Developed communication channels to reach out to the families and community (letters, radio, SMS, flyers, pamphlets)
- Achieved buy-in and support from the community
- Regular attendance became a community effort (for example, local store employees help inform us about who is skipping school; community center staff report any children seen throughout the day so that community advocates can reach out and try to keep them in school)
- Gaining trust from kids and families (for example, families felt comfortable calling Family Advocates to pick up children when they have missed the bus or for assistance with other familial situations that might prevent their children from getting to school)
- Being supported by our administrative staff
- Being able to attend the Dropout Prevention Convention
- Having the trust and freedom to make the decisions we feel are in the best interest of the families and children to achieve better attendance
- Creating an atmosphere where the students understand the importance of attendance and how it can affect their future

Lessons Learned as a Family Advocate:

- A better understanding of the importance of attendance
- Learning how to approach and communicate with ALL the different families and mindsets
- That the children do care about their future and education, but need to understand the role that regular attendance plays in reaching their goals
- To truly see changes in attendance, the school and community need to have a “wrap-around” support to connect with and support the Tribal families and their children

TAPP Barriers/Challenges:

- Keeping the address and contact numbers up to date with the school systems
- Bringing change into the school and gaining support of staff
- Educating the families of the importance of an education for their children
- Rebuilding the trust and cooperation of tribal partners and the school district
- Not having a model to follow
- Learning as we go!

Roles Partners Played:

- Community members and departments helping identify when children are not at school and contacting us
- Sharing information and resources to help support the Family Advocates
- Sharing of ideas and involving the Family Advocate in their inter-departmental meetings and objectives

Sustainability Plan:

The TAPP has provided an opportunity to implement incentive programs that motivate students. The TAPP program is sustainable with support from the tribal partners and community organizations as well as the teachers for years to come. With communication and continued partnering with our tribal organizations the attendance tracking will be easily sustainable. This will allow for early identification of students with chronic absenteeism and help develop a strategy to improve it.