



From the Cabinet

By FPS Associate Superintendent Dr. Robert Grosz

Chronic Absenteeism

According to the Department of Education:

“Education can only fulfill its promise as the great equalizer—a force that can overcome differences in privilege and background—when we work to ensure that students are in school every day and receive the supports they need to learn and thrive.

At the same time, we know that many students experience tremendous adversity in their lives—including poverty, health challenges, and difficult family circumstances—that make it difficult for them to take advantage of the opportunity to learn at school.”

<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>

Students who are chronically absent, meaning they miss more than 10 percent of the days in a school year, are at serious risk for low academic success. In addition, students who are chronically absent are less likely to read at grade level by third grade, have lower test scores, and have an increased risk of dropping out of school.

For these reasons, the Fargo Public Schools has utilized dollars allocated to the district under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to hire:

- Student Attendance Specialists for the district.
 - The Student Attendance Specialists help enforce the rules and policies of the district for proper school attendance.
 - They will:
 - Extend every effort to see that students attend school regularly when not ill and report to class promptly.
 - Cooperate with teachers, counselors, school administrators, and parents to assure compliance with attendance laws and regulations
 - In addition, the Student Attendance Specialists have been charged to assist the district in researching and implementing strategies to help reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student attendance.
- Middle School and High School Student Success Advisors/Mentors (SSAM)
 - The SSAM’s role will be to help build quality relationships with students and families, create and sustain a schedule of positive checkpoint meetings with

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- students, and to help maintain student data tracking, including attendance data, for the students in which they have been assigned by the building leadership team.
- Indian Education Student Advisor-Mentor/Family Liaison (AMFL)
 - The AMFL's role will be to complete many of the same responsibilities as the SSAMs, focusing on Native American families.
- Expanded the roles of current English Language (EL) staff to serve as EL Linguistic and Cultural Liaisons (ELLCL).
 - The AMFL and ELLCLs will be additional resources for families and buildings to help build a bridge of understanding and cooperation between school, student and home.

By completing these tasks, the additional staff should help improve student attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Each year, FPS District Office staff work with building principals to develop a building growth plan. In the building growth plan is a specific goal around engagement and chronic absenteeism. Each building leadership team has been asked to analyze absenteeism data at the building administrative level, building teacher leadership level, and building (all teachers) level including subgroups and develop an action plan around student attendance.

By focusing on chronic absenteeism, the Fargo Public Schools is working toward achieving our mission of educating and empowering all students to succeed.

