



RUSSELL COUNTY USD 407

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USD 407 Chronic Absenteeism July 14, 2023 Update

Dear Families and Community,

In my district newsletter that was released on July 1, 2023, I addressed the district's chronic absenteeism rate. Our chronic absenteeism rate for the 2022-2023 school year was 25.9%, which is above the state average. This means that 1 in 4 students are missing more than 10% of the school days, or more than 16 days of school each year. This is a troubling trend.

Yesterday, KWCH News out of Wichita asked if we would be willing to do an interview. I accepted this interview because we must tell our story. We will not correct our issues if we continue to hide our problems. USD 407 accepts full responsibility for our numbers. Because of that, we are creating solutions to help us combat these issues.

Some of USD 407's work include:

- We will be notifying all families of students who were chronically absent via phone and letters so they are aware prior to the new school year.
- We have created a counseling/attendance monitor position so that we are tracking attendance and notifying families daily.
- We have purchased a program within our student information system, PowerSchool, that will notify us daily if a student falls below 90% attendance, is truant, or any other parameters that we choose to set up.
- We have proposed policy changes that have been approved by the Board of Education. One policy change is that students participating in athletics/activities must have 90% or higher attendance rates to compete or participate.

USD 407 is committed to assisting families and students. Again, we are also committed to accepting responsibility for our chronic absenteeism rate. It is our job to do so.

I was shown Facebook posts regarding the issue. I read many comments in which blame was being put on others. Do not blame the Board of Education for putting this on the agenda. Blame me. I asked for it to be there. Do not blame KWCH News for making Russell look bad. Blame me. I gave them permission to come interview us when they called to raise awareness to the issue.

Instead of pointing blame, we need to work together as a community to lead the change we desire to see. USD 407 is committed to working through these challenges. The question I leave for you today is this: What is your commitment?

Respectfully,

Mr. Jordan Perez
USD 407 Superintendent