

# Parent Principal Corner



## OBSERVATIONS

### Finals

As we closed the first semester we set aside three days for finals. In an attempt to be fair to our students we worked to spread the tests out. (page 2)

### Attendance

Last semester our attendance rate was 92%. While on the surface that doesn't look bad, this means over 100 students were absent a day. (page 2)

### Course Offerings

One of the drawbacks of a 7 period system is the number of courses a student can take over 4 years. When you subtract the number of required courses by the state it leaves students with limited choices. (page 2)

### AWL (Academic Warning List)

This semester the high school will take another step in its student improvement process. During the first semester the high school ran a weekly Academic Warning List on Wednesdays. This served as a general warning to students. This semester we will use the AWL to pressure students to keep up with their school work. (page 2)

## New Semester

I wanted to start this newsletter off with a small warning. Those of you who may have been reading my previous newsletter online may find a couple of articles being repeated here. I felt those items needed to be read and the best way for that to happen was if I mailed them home.

Enclosed find your students grade card for the first semester. This grade card is very important because it determines whether credit was earned during the first semester. Should you find an "F" or "I" please contact the instructor.

I have been in education for over twenty-five years and I have learned several things about the spring semester. First, it flies by. Before you know it your mailbox will have the yearend report card sitting in it. Second, with spring weather some students lose focus and made decisions that impact their whole semester. Parents are extremely important in helping students stay focused and on task in passing. Third, spring fever leads many students to want to skip school. Again, it is important that parents take a hard look at when they take a student from school. Each hour they miss requires some form of makeup work. Missing too often can bury a student.

There are a number of changes for 2nd semester that parents and students need to note. Back in

November the board adopted a new attendance policy. This policy limits the number of times a parent can excuse their student from school each semester. Parents are given 5 Parent Excuses they can use for whatever they wish (examples from first semester would include going hunting, appointment to get tattoos, sleeping in, needing to come home and take a nap before work, etc. If a student misses between 1 to 2 periods in a day it counts as a 1/2 day missed. If they miss more than 2 periods, we count that as a full parent request. Remember, if the student has a doctor or dentist appointment they only need to bring a note from the medical office or have them fax it to the high school. There are unlimited medical excuses. If you have special circumstances please contact an administrator for clarification. Once the five excuses are used a medical excuse must be submitted or the student is marked unexcused. More on this can be found on the high school website.

Another big change for second semester deals with students maintaining good standing. If a student is not in good standing they will not be allowed to attend any after school activities. If they are out for sports they will not be allowed to play in games and if their poor standing status continues over several weeks they will not be allowed to practice as well. More on this can be found in the article titled AWL (page 2).

### Items From Cover Page

**Finals:** We still have some work to do with our current finals schedule. Our goal is to get to a place where we truly assess student learning for the whole semester. While all teachers did give finals this year we did have a few get done a little early, but we will work that out with the teachers. Another problem was the number of students who wanted to leave early or had appointments scheduled during finals. We will do a better job of getting out the finals schedule in advance so parents can schedule accordingly. One last point regarding finals, in an attempt to spread out the finals and give students an opportunity to work with teachers during the school day, the high school dismissed around 1 p.m. It was our hope students would take the opportunity, if needed, to meet with teachers and get any make up work completed. Otherwise, we opened the doors and let them go home. Of course one of the problems with this philosophy deals with bus riders. Unfortunately, the bus schedule cannot be changed. This means we asked bus riders to hang around until normal time. We had students stay in their 5th hour during this time. I know this isn't popular for students or staff. We took a count and determined around 275 students stayed to either get additional help or wait for the bus.

**Attendance:** Previous newsletters have addressed the need for the policy shift and more information can be found on the high school website including frequently asked questions. In short - parents are

given 5 "Parent Excuses" to use during the semester. Simply contact the attendance clerk (Mrs. Anderson – she can be reached directly by dialing 379-5860) and let her know you are using a parent excuse.

**AWL:** On Wednesdays the counseling department will run a list of students with two or more failing grades. At that point students will be notified that they are now on this list. If a student is on the list they will not be allowed to attend after school activities (games, concerts, plays, etc.). If a student is out for a sport they will be allowed to continue to practice but will NOT be allowed to play in the games. So the question now is ... "How does a student get off this list?" First, do the school work that might be the reason for failing, and then wait until the next week's AWL to see if their name has been removed. Or a student can take action immediately to get off the list by meeting with any teacher who is showing a failing grade. Together they can determine what needs to be done to improve the grade. The teacher then only needs to send an email to the counseling office or sign a note for the student to deliver to the counseling office. (Note: the student may be failing the course due to missing school because of sickness. In this case the student gets the signature of the teacher and takes it to the counselors' office.)

**Detention Notifications:** In an attempt to cut down on the cost of mailings the office will no longer be sending home detention slips via mail. Instead, a copy will be given to your student for them to share with you. Should there be a major issue related to detention being assigned,

or a large amount of detention, one of the assistant principals will contact parents via phone. We will continue to send home notifications related to ISS or OSS along with phone calls.

**Failing Packets:** In an attempt to help students who are close to passing a class, teachers have developed student packets. These packets include work, lessons, tests, etc. that the student needs to complete to pass the course. The counseling office will work with the student (parents will be notified) on setting up a way the student can complete this work outside the normal school day. This option is provided so that the student does not lose the credit and have to take the whole course over. The student can still schedule time to see the teacher and when the work is done it needs to be submitted to the teacher for grading. Please note that not all failing courses will result in a packet. In some cases the teacher has determined that the knowledge needed to pass the class is so lacking that the only way to achieve success is to retake the course.

**Course Offerings:** One little issue that has jumped out at me this year has been the limitation of a 7 period schedule. This has been a topic of the leadership team since August. Unfortunately, when you consider the requirements set down by the state department over a four year period students are limited in the number of electives they might want to take. There has been some discussion on going to an 8 period schedule next year. The problem there can be class size. Adding another course for students to take without adding staff increases the classroom sizes. This will continue to be a topic of discussion for the spring semester as well.