

Parent Principal Corner



Notes

Pre-enrollment

Enrollment for next year is now closed. If your student failed to turn in a pre-enrollment form, the counselors have enrolled them for next year. Students were told failing to turn in a pre-enrollment form would result in the school enrolling them with no real chance to change their schedule this fall.

Attendance

The new policy is under way. After just 2 months, we have 45 students who have already used their 5 Parent Excuses and are now facing disciplinary action for each absence hereafter.

AWL (Academic Warning List)

We are now into week ten of the AWL. So far we have seen a drop of almost 40 students from the original list. We continue to have around 8% of the student body on the list. Our goal is to get it below 5%.

Discipline Numbers

The number of discipline referrals to the office for first semester was just over 700. The number last year at this time was around 1300. (Tardies, behavior, etc.)

SPRING TIME

It may be hard to believe, but spring is almost here! This time of year can create a few challenges.

Traditionally, it is a tougher semester to keep grades up for several reasons. Students miss a lot of school due to spring sports and the spring air itself can make it hard for students to focus and keep up.

As parents, you can help by staying on top of your child. Visit with them about their grades (check them on PowerSchool). Make sure your child makes up any work they miss, quickly. The fact is that most spring athletics cause students to miss some school which makes it easy for them to fall behind. Not falling behind is key!

While your child may sweetly try to talk you into excusing them so they can spend time in the sun, please encourage them to attend school. As stated

earlier, it is easy to fall behind in the spring and once you fall behind it can be extremely difficult to catch up.

A couple of notes related to spring time:

1. Prom is May 1st. With the implementation of the Academic Warning List (AWL), students who are on this list will not be allowed to attend Prom.
2. We will soon be finishing up state assessments and getting ready for our MAP test (another assessment). At some point we will take a moment to take a deep breath.
3. Graduation is May 16th. Senior parents will be getting a letter explaining the details. Make sure to take a moment to review the letter and contact us if you have any questions.

Enjoy the spring weather. We have less than 60 days of school left!

Rumors

I like to address rumors when I can and I have heard a couple this past month so I thought it was time to share.

The first deals with the discipline policy as it relates to fighting here at the high school. I have heard that there are some in the community who think there have been more fights this year than in the past. I have tried to go back and gather data from past years, but it has been a little difficult. The definition of a fight has created a problem. This year if a student throws a punch it has been considered a fight, whereas in the past that may or may not have been the case.

As of March, we have had a total of 13 students involved in fights. This is compared to 8 last year. Granted, we still have a few months to go, but we have also had a tough winter which, believe me, has an impact.

The second part of this rumor is that students are not being kicked out of school as required by board policy. All students who fight are taken to a hearing board, made up of educators, who hear the evidence and make a decision. As required by board policy, the high school administrative team recommends that the student be expelled from school for the remainder of the school year. However, we also look at the history of the student, their grades, attendance, etc. If we feel this student could be successful here at school, we inform the hearing committee we would be willing to work on a behavioral plan with the student, if they choose to make that decision. At that point, the hearing committee makes the decision on what happens to the student. Of the 13 students, the hearing committee has sent 8 back with behavioral plans. Of those eight, we have only had to remove one student for

violating the behavioral plan. The four students who the hearing committee didn't return have either been left to find other options for themselves or, under certain legal restrictions, the school district has provided options outside the school building.

I wish I could provide data that compares us to other schools in the area, but at this time I don't have access. With a few unofficial contacts, I believe we are way below many schools in the area.

One last comment about fighting. There is one thing that jumps out at me and it's what I call "poodle fights". When you get around a small dog they often do a lot of barking. Well, I've seen my share of students exchanging words without throwing punches. These are addressed with either detention, ISS (In School Suspension) or OSS (Out of School Suspension) depending on the degree of the bark. It may be these verbal exchanges that some people think are fights.

Another rumor I have heard deals with possible drug use at the high school. I won't lie to the community. There is drug use amongst our students. Unfortunately that is true in any school, public or private.

In talking with other administrators around Topeka and surrounding areas, I have learned that marijuana use is up across the board. We have discussed. As a league, why this may be, but have no real answers short of it is more available and cheaper.

So far this year we have had more discipline referrals with students using drugs at school than we have had with fighting. Several of the referrals occurred at sporting events.

A student who supplies other students with drugs (whether

selling or just giving) faces expulsion. An expulsion could be up to 360 days. Should a student attend school or a school activity under the influence they face a 5-day suspension or more, under the current discipline policy.

It does interest me that if a student loses his/her temper and punches a kid they risk being removed for up to 360 days just like a student who sells/provides drugs. Yet, a student who comes to school drunk or high gets just 5-days of OSS.

Dealing directly with a rumor ... late February there was an event that took place at the high school that involved students and drugs. I have heard all kinds of rumors about this event. Bottom line, we had a handful of students who took someone's prescription pills. No one passed out or fell to the floor, but after talking with the students we did call the EMTs as a precautionary move.

In a complex with over 1100 people, it doesn't take much for a rumor to gain legs. Earlier in the year I heard I was jumped by a group of students during passing period. When the truth was - I slipped and fell on a water spill. To help deal with rumors we created a web site <http://tiny.cc/QlFpZ>, where staff, students, parents and community can ask about a rumor dealing with the high school.

Last, we are currently working on a new discipline policy. We will continue to create a safe school environment. But we also want the opportunity to work with our students. These are young people who sometimes act without thinking. They are here for an education and learning correct behavior is part of that learning process. We hope you understand, and if you ever have a question or concern, please feel free to contact us.