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Discussion #10

In your opinion, what is the most important thing a school leader can do to prevent students from dropping out of school?

There are a lot of factors that lead to dropping out of school, as our module material mentions, including large schools / class sizes, where students have a large amount of anonymity, and they believe “no one will miss them”, lack of good relationships at school, poor home life situations, unsupportive community factors, etc. In my personal experience, I think that there are a number of factors that we as admins need to make happen in order to decrease drop out and truancy rates. They are **1) Having and enforcing clear expectations for good and bad behavior**, and **2) Developing healthy relationships & habits**

Clear Expectations for Behavior: As admins, we need to make sure that students and staff are aware of and following clear, direct policies that offer positive rewards for following the rules and expectations, but also negative consequences for misbehavior. When students know they will be held accountable, they are much more likely to abide by the rules to avoid negative consequences, and many will aspire to earn positive rewards by being to class on time and every day, etc. Staff will also be more supportive of enforcement because they know that if they do, they will be supported, and they will be reprimanded if they are not following the plan, just as the students would be.

Healthy Relationships & Habits: If students and staff know that we are all in this together, things will improve. Positive school climate and culture result in more buy in from students and staff. As admins, it is our responsibility to build, repair, and bolster that climate. We can do this thru personal enthusiasm, efforts to know student and staff names, being personable and approachable, and establishing a clear hierarchy that helps staff and students know what their role is, expectations of them, etc. Also, we need to be communicating, from a school level and a class level, frequently with parents. That way, they are aware of what is going on, and know that we want the very best for them and their students.

As we as admins implement a policy of clear expectations and consequences, and create an environment at our school where everyone is respected, healthy habits are encouraged, and communication is clear and respectful, I believe that we *can* overcome the twin monsters of truancy and drop-out. Research has proven that these factors can make a key difference; the only thing left is our willingness to engage and make these goals a reality.