



Division Director Board Report

Upper School

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From the Senior Leader's Desk

Jon Siapno, Director of College and Career Counseling

As the first semester draws to a close, the upper school remains positioned to achieve its mission-critical goals for the year. As part of our successes, we are seeing emerging leaders from among our teachers, and our leadership team continues to tackle complex challenges. It is clear, however, that the effects of the vacancies are rippling throughout the team, especially for our senior leaders, comprised of Priscilla Mendez, our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Ahjia Moore, our Dean of Students, Antonio Martinez, our Associate Dean of Students, and myself, our Director of College and Career Counseling.

In our last board meeting, our board president asked the upper school senior leadership team how it was doing, especially in the absence of a division director. While the work of the senior leadership team is fast-paced, often requiring us to juggle multiple tasks at once while regularly completing ad hoc projects, the work is also stimulating, requiring deep thinking, growing in our roles, and evolving. One of the hallmarks of our team is our agility -- we frequently assess, reassess, and, if needed, redirect courses of action to adjust to changing conditions. Each person on the team is involved in our division's success, and we are able to remain vigilant of our division's priorities because of it.

In a mid-semester self-reflection, the upper school senior leadership team reaffirmed its commitment to the following priorities: student learning, especially related to SBAC scores; faculty development through feedback cycles, one-on-ones, and classroom management issues; collaborating with operations to ensure campus safety is strong inside and outside of classrooms; prioritizing use of suspension only for unlawful infractions, to the extent possible; parent engagement and collaboration; and a high graduation rate with 95% or more of graduates having a post-secondary plan.

In the subsequent pages, we will report on culture and climate, and attendance and chronic absenteeism, as it relates to our division. Here are our key takeaways:

- While the transition to the new campus was met with multiple challenges, upper school students have created multiple opportunities to build a stronger culture and climate
- Substitute coverage continues to be a challenge given the teacher vacancies, in addition to planned and unplanned absences
- The August through November Average Daily Attendance (ADA) rate of 97.5% highlights that the proactive and responsive efforts by the upper school Deans of Students Office is helping students and families understand that student attendance is critical towards their social development and academic success

In closing, amidst changing conditions, the upper school remains positioned to make progress towards its annual goals in service of the mission of Making Waves.

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Culture and Climate

Priscilla Mendez, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Ahjia Moore, Dean of Students

What?

Successes:

- Kindness Week Campaign led by Brain & Psychology Club
- Increase in student reports of vandalism as well as students taking initiative to clean up said vandalism
- Gifts of Gratitude fundraiser created 10 food baskets for food insecure MWA families during November break
- 1st annual Latino Heritage Month Assembly in the upper school
- Decreased student “cut” attendance codes

Challenges:

- Substitute coverage
- English 10 departure
- Multiple acts of campus graffiti/vandalism
- Increase in daily student tardy/lates

So What?

The upper school students have created multiple opportunities to build a stronger culture and climate. While the transition to the new campus was met with multiple challenges, there were also many firsts as well as the continuation of various traditions. Students provided multiple opportunities to display and share in kindness activities during the first annual Kindness Week. Examples of kindness activities included anonymous positive affirmations on lockers, gifting goodies to classmates, lunchtime community building activities, as well as multiple displays on campus that promoted a positive culture. Another inaugural event that occurred this year, spearheaded by students in Sangre Latina, was the Latino Heritage Month assembly. Traditional dancing, music playing, singing, and art displays were created and celebrated amongst the entire student body. Additionally, the National Honor Society members spearheaded the 3rd annual Gifts of Gratitude event. They promoted and attended the first ever, off-campus fundraiser as well as partnered with faculty and staff to create food baskets for food insecure families within our community. This has come to be a highlight for both NHS members as well as adults on campus, as we are able to partner with and serve our families during the November break. Lastly, while cuts were a concern during quarter one, there was a marked decrease in quarter two due to strategic and intentional communication to families of students who “cut” a class. The strong partnership built between faculty who were asked to consistently report cuts, the registrars who actively searched campus for students marked as cut, and the deans office who followed up with families to report and meet to discuss cuts allowed this trend to discontinue at the pace it previously was.

As students and staff became more acclimated to the newly expanded campus, the upper school experienced a series of challenges in other ways during the second quarter. Substitute coverage continues to be a challenge given the two teacher vacancies in addition to planned and unplanned absences. 10th grade students especially experienced an impact of the mid-quarter departure of the English 10 teacher after not having a teacher for approximately four weeks. In partnership with the Substitute Coordinator, members of the upper school leadership team have supported with coverage. First, there was an increase in restroom vandalism and graffiti. Open Learning Spaces furniture and wall space were also impacted by mild vandalism. Along with the increase in acts of vandalism and graffiti, there was an increase in daily tardy and lates for students. Due to the daily afterschool building sweeps that had occurred, there is strong reason to believe students were engaging in the acts of vandalism during times they were unaccounted on campus (i.e. out of class without permission).

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Now What?

In direct response to teacher vacancies, the upper school has hired an on-site substitute that has added consistency and support with student learning and on-task behavior. Regarding the latenesses and tardies, the deans office will begin a concerted effort to relaunch the tardy/late detention programming in order to promote a decrease in occurrences. The relaunch of detention programming includes targeted student and parent/guardians follow-up and differentiated levels of intervention. Lastly, the upper school is partnering with the operations team to provide more adult supervision during instructional time in order to curb the ability for students to remain unsupervised for extended periods of time on our expanded campus. In doing so, the promotion of visibility is also meant to help create a stronger connection between staff members and upper school students and faculty.

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Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Analysis

Antonio Martinez, Associate Dean of Students

What?

Successes:

- Average Daily Attendance for upper school for August through November was 97.5%
- 100% of upper school students identified with unexcused chronic absences and tardies are on chronic absence student tracker and will have met with the Associate Dean of Students (ADOS) by end of quarter 2
- All students with 3 or more unexcused absences or tardies will have had in-person meeting or phone conference with ADOS by end of quarter 2
- 100% of Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) level 1 & 2 letters delivered to families
- Weekly, divisionwide attendance meetings to discuss critical information pertaining to daily student attendance

Challenges:

- Emerging student illnesses/sick for multiple days given the winter season
- Lack of daily parent/guardian verification of illness or absences reporting to Front Office
- Absence requests for multiple days for non-emergencies
- Consistent pattern of lower attendance on field trip days
- High amount of daily tardy/lates

So What?

In direct effort to align and calibrate on attendance intervention and policy enforcement, the middle school and upper school Deans of Students (DOS) Offices established weekly attendance data monitoring and intervention meetings. The weekly attendance meetings include both middle and upper school social workers and the registrar and have been critical towards the success achieved in proactively addressing and meeting the needs of chronically absent students who are currently chronically absent. In these meetings we identify relevant marketing material that is helpful for students and families, we discuss student incentives that will continue to help support attendance improvement, we identify students who would benefit from socio-emotional resources such as checkin's with Social Worker or participating in the young men or young women empowerment groups. Last, these meetings provide the team an opportunity to calibrate on students who are currently under the chronically absent category and share helpful insight on student or family, which helps identify proper support.

The upper school has experienced a consistent pattern of lower attendance on field trip days due to students opting out of both going to the trip or coming to school. The Student Activities Coordinator, advisory teams, and DOS Office continue to collaborate on reiterating mandatory attendance expectations for field trips, as well as highlighting the benefit of "experiential learning".

In meeting with students with unexcused chronic absences or tardies, they communicate that a majority of the time they are sick and their parent forgets to inform the school. In response to this information the upper school DOS is actively communicating with all parents and reminding them of the importance of notifying the school when their student is going to miss campus. This communication is done through phone calls and sending families relevant attendance marketing materials. Additionally, the upper school DOS reminds families of the impact this has on their students academic as an excused absence allows for students to make up their work for 100% of the credit versus an unexcused absence students can only up to 70%.

The August through November ADA data highlights that the proactive and responsive efforts by the upper school DOS is

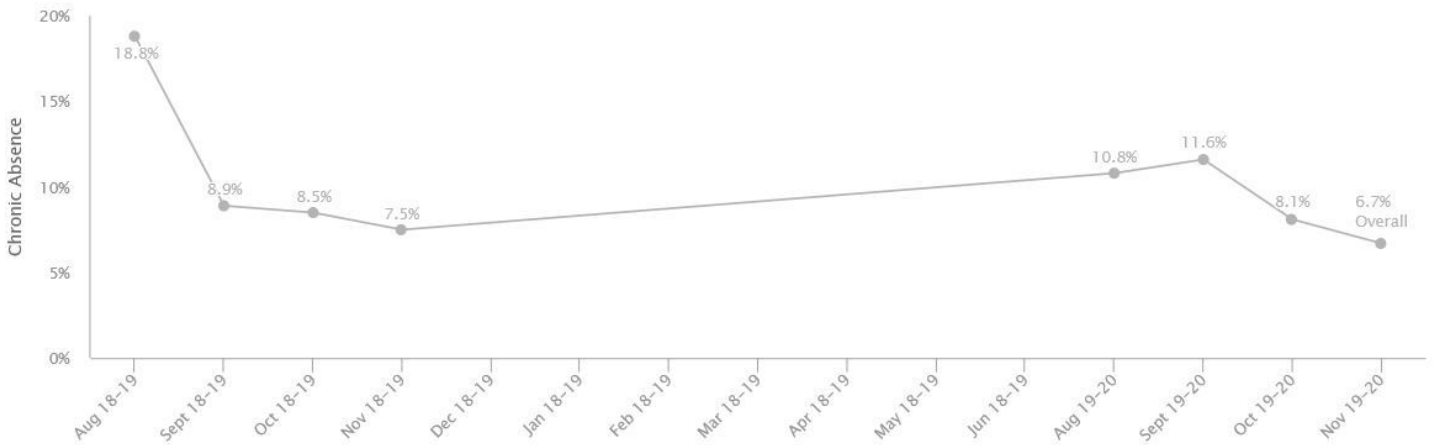
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helping students and families understand that student attendance is critical towards their social development and academic success. In communicating with families, they have shared their appreciation for the DOS as the consistent outreach shows them that the school cares about the wellbeing of their student and family. Additionally, families have also shared gratitude on the marketing material sent out this year and have said that it has been both informative and relevant.

Now What?

In efforts to properly support students identified with unexcused chronic absences and tardies, the upper school DOS will continue to work in collaboration with students, families and other critical stakeholders to identify personalized support strategies that will meet the needs of the students and families. Additionally, in efforts to reduce the number of student tardies, the DOS has restructured its detention system so that students who are marked as tardy will partake in community service during lunch that day. The DOS believes that this new structure to detention will support in holding students accountable in addition to reminding them of the importance of meeting school expectations and maximizing instructional minutes.

The DOS, in collaboration with the Director of Instructor and Curriculum, has finalized the Semester 1 Final Exam schedules and will be sharing this information with students and families. Final Exam Attendance Policy will also be shared so that students and families understand the importance of coming to school every day until the winter break. This information will be shared through the following methods: Saturday Academy on December 7th, 2019, and the creation of final exam countdown signage, which will be posted throughout the campus and sending out mailings to families.



Chronic Absence .8% Decrease

	Aug 18-19 ↓↑	Sept 18-19 ↓↑	Oct 18-19 ↓↑	Nov 18-19 ↓↑	Dec 18-19 ↓↑	Aug 19-20 ↓↑	Sept 19-20 ↓↑	Oct 19-20 ↓↑	Nov 19-20 ↓↑	Dec 19-20 ↓↑
Overall	97.4%	97%	96.9%	96.6%	96.4%	98.3%	97.1%	97.1%	97%	97%

Upper School August through November 2018-2019 ADA Compared to 2019-2020 ADA