

# K I T S A P Daily News



## NEWS

### SK schools continue attendance improvement efforts

By Britney Fletcher-West Port Orchard Independent • December 23, 2024 1:30 am



South Kitsap School District leaders presented a comprehensive plan to improve student attendance during a board meeting Dec. 18.

Officials reported progress, with attendance rates steadily increasing. The percentage of students attending 90% or more of the time grew from 13.9% in 2021-22 to over 21.6% in 2023-24. The district's goal is to reach 75% by the end of the current school year.

"This is hard work, but it's worth it," assistant superintendent Tom Edwards said. "Attendance is the foundation of student success, and we're committed to making a difference."

Edwards and his team outlined the district's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) aimed at addressing chronic absenteeism, which has been a significant issue.

Nearly 85% of students in the district were identified as at-risk or chronically absent during the 2022-23 school year, surpassing the national average. The district has since implemented a three-tiered strategy to re-engage students and improve attendance.

The first tier focuses on universal support for all students and families. Initiatives include educating parents about attendance policies, improving data tracking, and creating school-wide incentives for attendance. Each school developed action plans to emphasize the importance of regular attendance and promote consistent communication.

The second tier targets small groups of students with moderate attendance challenges. Strategies include mentorship programs, personalized check-ins and parent engagement efforts. The district also adopted a Hope Scale survey to identify barriers such as transportation issues, mental health concerns or financial hardships.

The third tier provides intensive, individualized support for students with the most severe attendance issues. These efforts involve community engagement boards, partnerships with local organizations and truancy protocols. The district's collaborations with groups like St. Vincent de Paul have helped students overcome obstacles and return to school.

One example shared highlighted a student who reconnected with school through mentorship and is no longer considered at risk. "By connecting families with resources tailored to their needs, we've seen remarkable improvements," said Pat Oster, Discovery High School principal.

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