

 VIDEO
4:44 min

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Forming Relationships With Parents and Families

Jefferson Davis High School, Texas
April 2011

Topic DROPOUT PREVENTION

Practice ADULT ADVOCATES

Highlights

- » Student success is dependent on having support at home as well as in school.
- » Davis High School works to develop relationships with students' families by opening the doors for them and empowering them to be part of their child's education.
- » Sometimes Davis staff members visit students and their families at home to discuss attendance, enrollment, graduation requirements, and other issues relevant to the students.
- » Davis staff members work directly with families to minimize such barriers to graduation as low self-esteem, lack of transportation, limited family educational background, and relationship issues.

About the Site Jefferson Davis High School
Houston, TX

Demographics

- » 89% Hispanic
- » 10% Black
- » 1% White

- » 92% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » 15% Special Education


(Houston Independent School District, District and School Profiles, 2009-10)


Jefferson Davis High School implements multiple strategies to ensure all students graduate fully prepared to pursue their postsecondary goals:


- » Staff use middle school student achievement and nonacademic outcome data to monitor students' progress toward graduation and postsecondary readiness, providing interventions for struggling students and those at risk
- » A ninth-grade mentoring program provides students with supportive adult relationships
- » Students can enroll in programs that provide tutoring, family support, college workshops, counseling, and dropout recovery success
- » To foster a sense of community among students, the school sets high expectations, holding students accountable, and celebrates their successes

Full Transcript





 **00:04** My name is Kasey McKee, and I'm the project manager of a large dropout prevention agency here on campus, which is at Davis High School in Houston, Texas.


 **00:15** What we see is for students to stay on track with graduation, we really need a full wraparound support from all team players for the children. So basically, they have good support here at school and then it is essential for them to have that same support at home.


 **00:33** We really do have a total commitment as far as it's concerned developing relationships with the families. This includes all Davis staff: faculty, staff, added programs here at Davis, principals, teachers, coaches. All work very hard to develop relationships with most of our students' families. So what we try to do at Davis is really

pull them in, open the doors for them to be here, educate them on what it takes for a child to graduate, and have them feel empowered to be part of that team.


 **01:06** At Davis High School we have a very open-door policy with families on campus. And so this looks like, we offer several—at least two—parent nights throughout the school year, where the parents are invited to come to the school and meet their teachers. We also do events, like have community dinners where we invite community partners and family members and staff and faculty and teachers and students to mingle together. We do a lot of parent phone calls. We do a lot of e-mailing back and forth. The parents will come visit us, kind of impromptu very, very often in many of our different offices and the different agencies and the principal’s office, etc.


 **01:50** But in some situations, we need to go to the child’s home, such as if they have had consistently low attendance, they have kind of been flagged for their attendance; if they are missing graduation requirements; or if the child has not been attending school for a series of days or weeks or months; or if also the child has not enrolled in school. So these families we identify as having a youth at risk for dropping out. And so if necessary, and when necessary, we will go visit the homes. This looks like a team of one or two or three of us, principals, teachers, coaches, all kinds of school support staff, truancy officers. And they will go to the parents’ home, in a polite way, and ask to have a conversation with them about their child’s schooling.

 **02:40** What we’ll see when we visit the homes is it’s a great way to get an immediate picture of what challenges the student might be facing. So during these visits, we will provide them with the tools they need, such as looking at report cards or transcripts, or just evidence of their child’s performance and then educate them on what the child needs to be successful and then how they can become part of this team.

 **03:02** By working with families here at Davis, we see that we can remove several barriers from graduation for our kids. So one large

one is just simply motivation. Sometimes the parents won't have clear motivation; they don't know what to do to support their child in school. So Davis can provide the role of educating them on what their young person needs to succeed in school and then eventually graduate.

 **03:26** A barrier that complicates a lot of our Davis students' lives is just general life events. Our families are probably working two to three jobs, providing for several children at home. They have limited time at home, especially during daylight hours. They may not have graduated themselves or have very limited education and just not be familiar with the process.

 **03:49** Our students, on the other hand, are dealing with several life events as well: relationship issues, maybe child abuse, homelessness, maybe just feeling very disenfranchised, very low self-esteem from low performance in the past. Also feeling suicidal, or just not feeling positive about school, so by identifying—or especially not having the items that they need to thrive successfully in school, such as appropriate clothing or sometimes having shoes or having transportation to get to school, they have no one to drop them off. So in these ways, we are able to strategize what are the specific barriers with our parents and our students and then work to remove those barriers and provide incentives for the young people to graduate and stay in school.