Characters

Mandy- An attendance counselor

Terry- A teacher in CMS schools

Sally- A teacher in UCPS schools

John- Student

*Taylor is conducting a causal interview about attendance in schools with several different school employees.*

Taylor: “Hi everyone! Thanks for taking the time to meet with me today. As you know, I would like to discuss the topic of attendance in schools and how it effects the type of education someone will receive. So to start, Mandy, since you are the professional with this kind of stuff, how many days are students allowed to miss?”

Mandy: “In elementary or middle school students that miss more than 10 unexcused or 20 altogether run the risk of being retained. High schoolers are only allowed to have 7 unexcused absences per class.”

Taylor: “ Terry, do you believe it is essential for students to attend school for a certain amount of days per year?”

Terry: “ I believe it is very important because students who attend school on a regular basis score better on academic test. I would consider any student who misses more than ten school days to have a chronic absence problem so I’m glad to see that there is some kind of punishment for students who do not comply.”

Taylor: “Mandy, besides being retained do students face any other kind of punishment?”

Mandy: “It’s pretty simple, Middle and elementary run the risk of being retained and high schoolers will fail that course.”

Taylor: “Sally, do you believe that there is a secret to maintaining an attendance policy and enforcing it?”

Sally: “Well, it is commonly believed and well supported by research that students who attend school regularly are more successful than those who do not. I think effective attendance polices are those that are clear and easy to understand, part of a strong, student focused school climate, provide opportunities for rewards and incentives and have strict penalties for truancy.”

Mandy: “ I would like to add, in our school system if a child is under 16 years of age and they are not counted present in school a certain amount of days the parent is held responsible and can be taken to truancy court.”

Taylor: “Terry, do your students receive any kind of incentive to attend school?”

Terry: “Currently our school system does not any type of reward for attending school. We have noticed that our attendance issues seem to stem from very low class families who do not see school as a top priority.”

Taylor: “I understand this because my family always saw education as a way to better yourself so it was very important for me to make good grades and the only way to do this was to attend school every day unless you were sick.”

Mandy: “I feel like it’s important for kids to go to school because education should be top priority in their lives at this point.”

Sally: “I agree. But the only way to do this is to have a successful attendance policy.”

Taylor: “Well that is about all I have for you guys. Thanks for the help.”

*Taylor is now interviewing a student and trying to get there perspective on attendance and the policies that come with it as well as allowing school employees to state their comments.*

Taylor: “Hi John. Do you receive any kind of reward for attending school?”

John: “No, I do not. Up until this year, if we had an ‘A’ in the class we could miss up to 3 days and be able to exempt our exams.”

Taylor: “Do you think you attend school more when you had this option?”

John: “Of course I did. I had a reason to want to attend school. Now I can miss one day or seven days and it still won’t affect me so of course I will miss as many days as possible.”

Taylor: “What kind of grades to do make?”

John: “I am typically an ‘A’ or ‘B’ student.”

Taylor: “Did you make straight ‘A’s’ when the incentive was in place?

John: “Not always but I definitely strived to make the A’s then.”

Mandy: “ I think that attendance just becomes an issue in high school because students have the option to drive themselves to school or just stay home. If they have an incentive to be there they will be more likely to show up.”

Terry: “I agree I think this all on the educators and if they are not going to give rewards for attending school they should at least make it fun to be there!”

Taylor: “Thanks again for everyone stating their opinions!”