

Van Buren High School

Eliminating Barriers to Student Achievement!

Who is Not Excelling at VBHS and Why?

VBHS has identified 3 barriers to student achievement....

- Lack of Student Attendance
- Disciplinary Actions that Remove Students from the Classroom
- Allowing students to accept a zero instead of completing assignments

According to NAEP tests taken by 2010 seniors, 84% of VBHS students scored as well as students at high schools across the nation who have been labeled “high-performing” high schools by the Southern Regional Board and High Schools That Work! Seniors scored extremely well in reading, science, and math. However, the remaining 16% of VBHS students scored considerably lower than the lowest performing students at the same high performing high school. The data indicates a “great discrepancy” between these two groups of VBHS students. In other words, most students at VBHS perform well in reading, math, and science...but the “bottom falls out” for at-risk VBHS students.

The VBHS Leadership Team identified three barriers to academic achievement for at-risk students.

BARRIER #1—Students simply “take a zero” when they do NOT want to complete assignments. Baseline data indicated that during the 1st quarter of the 2010—2011 school year, students at VBHS had collectively accumulated **7,175** zeros for assignments not completed.

BARRIER #2— VBHS currently has only two options when disciplining students (in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions) both of which remove the students from the classroom (the learning environment).

BARRIER #3—Although the cur-



rent attendance policy in which students lose credit for courses (in which they have too many absences) is a deterrent for the majority of the student population, the policy has not reduced the actual % of students who lose credit.

At risk students do not excel at VBHS because they receive too many zeros, are removed from the classroom when disciplined, and completely lose motivation for learning when they have lost credit for too many absences.

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

- ◆ Check Pinnacle often....talk to your child regularly about missing assignments!
- ◆ If your child receives early morning detention or Saturday school...please ensure your child attends!
- ◆ Only allow your child to miss school when absolutely necessary!



During the fall term of 2010, approximately 25 parents and teachers researched what high performing secondary schools across the nation are doing to address VBHS barriers to student achievement. Information was compiled from schools from California to Maine

Eliminating Barriers—Focus Study Team

to Florida...as well as nearby schools in Arkansas! The focus team met several times to share information and collectively create possible options for the VBHS staff to consider. During this time, the entire VBHS staff completed a study of the book, “The Power of ICU” authored by Danny Hill and Dr. Jason Nave which provided concrete methods to end student apathy, engage students, and hold

students responsible for assigned work.

On November 22-23, VBHS staff members completed the book study, reviewed options developed by the parent/teacher focus team, and make decisions as to what actions VBHS should take to eliminate barriers to student achievement

BARRIER 1: Every Child/Every Assignment Goal: Reduce the 7,175 zeros to.....ZERO!

Grades should reflect what a student has learned! Grades should NOT reflect student behavior, work ethics, or conduct. When a student earns a zero for not submitting an assignment, the zero indicated the students has learned 0%. If a student has been in class, chances are....more than 0% of the material has been learned. We must demand that students complete the work to know for certain

how much the student has learned. For example, if a student has earned three B's on three assignments....we assume the student is a "B" student. A "B" student suddenly becomes a "D" student when a zero is added. The student is really NOT a "D" student....the student is a "B" student who did not turn in an assignment.

52 teachers have signed up to try "The Power of ICU" for the

spring term of 2011! When a student is missing an assignment, the teacher will place the student on the ICU (Intensive Care Unit for Learning) list. A designated "lifeguard" will conference with the student and call the parent concerning the missing assignment. Students will be offered extra help and tutoring during 7am ICU, 3pm ICU, or Saturday School ICU! Certified teachers will be available during this time to tutor as needed.



Every Child...Every Assignment.... Students perform all assigned tasks for optimal learning purposes!

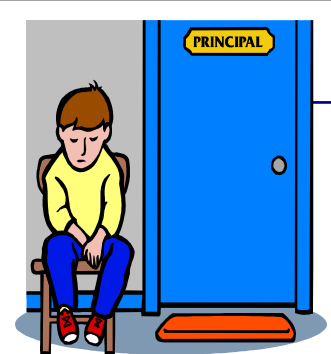
BARRIER 2: Disciplinary Options Optimal Classroom Time for ALL Students

Currently, the only two disciplinary options available at VBHS are options that immediately remove the student from the learning environment....In-School and Out-of School Suspensions. Students cannot continue to learn when they are not in the classroom.

Two additional options (in which students are NOT removed from

the classroom) will be available beginning in January, 2011. Early morning detention from 7:30 to 7:55 will be assigned to students with minor disciplinary infractions such as excessive tardies, personal phone use during the school day, etc. Students who do not attend early morning detention or violate other handbook rules can be assigned Saturday School from 8:00 to 11:00.

In-School Suspension, currently in practice, will only be assigned for students who do not attend detention or Saturday School and for students with more serious infractions. Out of School Suspensions will be assigned for the most serious of infractions usually associated with illegal activity or for student who have exhausted 10 days of In-School Suspension within a semester.



Discipline Actions...That Do Not Interfere with Learning!

BARRIER 3: Attendance Recovery

Currently, students who miss more than 10 days per semester in a class without medical excuse lose credit for the course. Beginning in January, 2011, when a student has accumulated 8 of these absences, the student may attend Saturday school to recover assignments and reverse the number of days absent.

Currently students who lose credit are legally required to attend school but see no reason to continue learning since no credit can be earned. Beginning in January, 2011, students who lose credit will be encouraged to continue learning to earn a passing grade. If a passing grade is earned, student can attend 5 consecutive days once the spring semester has ended to reverse

absences and the loss of credit.

The goal...motivate students toward optimal learning by reversing effects of attendance issues



REVERSE...REVERSE
For Students with Attendance Issues