

**La Costa Canyon High School
Principal's Message
Schoolwide Attendance and Tardy Policy**

Whether professional educators, school site staff, or parents and community members, we are all teachers offering important lessons to our children and the youth in our community, and if we want our students to live up to standards that are both reasonable and high, such as attending school and arriving to school on time, we must ourselves not only hold these high standards, but expect them as well. To assist with this, we are posting on our website both English and Spanish versions of *"San Dieguito Union High School District Business Services - Student Attendance is Everyone's Responsibility Tips for Parents 2007-2008"* and the *"LCCHS Schoolwide Tardy Policy"* to accompany this message.

We want everyone to understand that not only is attendance expected, it is a habit for life - attendance is one of those small details that lead to great success - and it all starts with arriving on time. We teach attention to detail. What is more, students and parents should also understand that excused or not, we do not collect ADA funding (the primary funding source for our public schools) for students that are not in attendance. We believe that the 56% reduction in tardies during the first month of this year, as compared with last, has less to do with the threat of penalties or sanctions and much more to do with the fact that every single teacher here on the LCCHS campus is consistently delivering the same message - Be Here, and Be Here on Time - It's Important. Please help us to reinforce this message.

The reasons for an excused absence (these would also be the only excused reasons for a student being late/tardy to class) are listed in Education Code 48205 (included in the "Tips for Parents"). If it is not on the list, it is not excused. If you consider 48205 (7), many reasons might qualify for an excused absence - especially if we are given advanced notice in the form of a written request. However (as examples and not intended to be a comprehensive listing), oversleeping, car trouble, and traffic are not excused absences. A family vacation is not excused. Students taking parents to the airport is not excused. "Personal Business" in and of itself is not excused. But, a trip to visit colleges preparatory to application and admission, a museum visit, or attendance at the symphony, could very well be excused, especially if advanced notice were given in the form of a written request. Any questions or need for clarification should be referred to the appropriate Assistant Principal.

Supportive of our own La Costa Canyon High School **Four Pillars of Character**: Respect, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, and Kindness, our Schoolwide Attendance and Tardy Policies being one outgrowth of these Four Pillars, Dr. Rudy Crew, the Superintendent of Schools for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the fourth largest school system in the United States advocates a similar structure in his new book *Only Connect*. Dr. Crew posits that:

"The four qualities of a mature and conscious contributor to society are

- 1. Personal Integrity*
- 2. Workplace Literacy*
- 3. Civic Awareness*
- 4. Academic Proficiency*

When we talk about education right now, we still concentrate on the last one, the academics, and consider the other three as somehow outside of the discussion. That is our central educational mistake. Mature, conscious people are more than just book smart, and success in the real world depends on qualities beyond grades, qualities Dick Murnane of the Harvard Graduate School of Education calls "soft skills." Schools should play just as important a role in teaching the first three qualities as they do in academics, but since all we pay for now are test scores, all we care about and all we measure is how well schools are teaching academics. And then nothing seems to improve. We miss Personal Integrity and Civic Awareness in our schools, but we've stopped expecting our schools to teach them, and we certainly don't measure them, because we're not paying for them as an outcome. We must make the production of these four qualities in our children the basic point of our public schools and focus everything, from curriculum and facilities to teacher training, leadership, and financial support, on that.

In this nation we're free to pursue happiness. It is not guaranteed. Happiness is something you work for by weaving your intrinsic character into the structure of society, and that weaving requires a range of knowledge that extends past the boundaries of the purely academic. It requires knowledge of yourself and the communities you belong to. It requires the ability to keep yourself and the world around you safe and healthy not just now but into the future, so that generations to come can pursue their happiness, too. The task of educators is not to create happy people - that's a fantasy. It's to raise the level of the four qualities of a mature and conscious contributor to society within all children to a place where they can go forth confidently into the world and pursue their happiness, each in his or her own way. It's what you want for your child, your grandchildren, the children of your friends. It's what we all

want, so it's time we as a nation asked our schools to be organized around producing these four qualities. That will demand, though, schools, businesses, communities, and families working together to accept the challenge of producing young people well armed for their lives. It is a joint responsibility, not one we should expect our schools to shoulder on their own...As W.H. Auden once wrote, "America is what you do." It is in the doing that we will find America again.

Here at La Costa Canyon High School we are all about building assets, building intrinsic motivation, and Building Relationships with Each and Every Student.

Or, for you fans of Cary Grant and Sophia Loren,

Presto, Presto do Your Very Besto!

Craig