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SFUSD SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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CITY AND STATE LEADERS UNITED TO COMBAT TRUANCY

DA and Superintendent Announce 4th Consecutive Year of Truancy Reduction in SF

August 11, 2011 (San Francisco) – City and state leaders kicked off the 2011-2012 school year, which begins Monday, August 15, by announcing that for the fourth year in a row, San Francisco has reduced the number of habitually and chronically absent children enrolled in its public schools.

This significant decline is part of the trend that began four years ago when the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) partnered to combat truancy. This year, there was a 16 percent reduction in the number of chronically absent students from the 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 school year and an 11 percent reduction in the number of habitually absent students for the same period. (Habitual absence is defined as an unexcused absence from a given school year of 10 to 19 days, while chronic absence is missing more than 20 days.)

San Francisco District Attorney George Gascón and SFUSD Superintendent Carlos Garcia were joined by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, State Senators Mark Leno and Leland Yee, Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, as well as representatives from the San Francisco Mayor's Office, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF), Police Department and the YMCA-run Truancy Assessment and Resource Center (TARC) at Leonard Flynn Elementary School to announce that city and community leaders would be continuing to team up to keep kids in school.

"As someone who dropped out of high school, I know firsthand how important it is to intervene early when it comes to truancy," said District Attorney Gascón. "One of the best investments we can make as a city is working collectively and collaboratively to motivate students and parents to make education a top priority. That begins by making sure that every child is in school learning because the safety of our communities depends on kids getting their lessons in a classroom instead of out on the streets. "

"We need to make sure that our youth are ready to compete in the 21st century economy and combating truancy and chronic absences are critical to ensuring that our children receive the education they need to close the graduation gap and succeed in the future," said Mayor Ed Lee.



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This year SFUSD plans to redouble efforts to notify families at the first signs of truancy or absenteeism. Through a new program from School Innovations and Advocacy called Attention2Attendance, Garcia said SFUSD will begin taking a more systematic approach to attendance management and dropout prevention that supports district goals to improve graduation rates, close the achievement gap, and recover learning time.

“Overall, we showed improvement last year with the percent of students present in school across all grade levels. This is a continuation of a positive trend that we have seen over the past several years. This year we plan to increase attendance even more as we are implementing a new district-wide system of centralized parent notification for both truancy and chronic absenteeism. The system will free up our school site staff to provide the direct support and interventions needed to assist students and families in addressing the impediments to school attendance,” said Superintendent Garcia.

Once again as students return to school, a letter from the District Attorney will be distributed to parents outlining the dangers of truancy and the potential criminal penalties for parents and guardians who fail to have their children attend school on a regular basis. Before any cases can be referred to the DA’s Office for prosecution, SFUSD follows a seven-step intervention process which involves alerting caregivers to the situation and providing direct support for families whose circumstances may keep their children out of school.

Families in need of attendance -related assistance are encouraged to contact SFUSD by calling 415-695-5543.

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