

For Twin Rivers USD, “Feel The Difference” Is About More Than Its Repaired And Replaced Hvac Units

Once “Troubled” District, Deploying Attention2Attendance® Software/Services Product, Is Emphasizing Attendance and Achievement

By Ed Goldman (*Ed Goldman writes a daily column for the Sacramento Business Journal.*)

A collaboration between educators and a national software-and-services company—one that emphasizes the relationship between school attendance and lifelong achievement—is helping turn a Sacramento school district into a real-time lab for getting parents, principals and students on the same bluebook page.

Twin Rivers Unified School District—whose name was often preceded in the media with the word “troubled”—signed a contract last July with School Innovations & Achievement (SI&A) to deploy the national company’s multiple award-winning package, Attention2Attendance, or A2A,

in its schools. SI&A, based in the Sierra foothills, hit the ground running. “A2A is such a comprehensive solution that we’ve already received data that turned our thinking around,” says Dr. Steven Martinez, District Superintendent—who came on board just a year-and-a-half ago.

Bill McGuire, the Deputy Superintendent of Administrative Services, adds, “What was profound was the data analysis we were able to do using SI&A’s dataROBOT. It allowed us to provide information to our schools that shocked some of the leaders who thought our 96 percent attendance rate was excellent.”

But, Dr. Martinez says, “We were looking at our own data the wrong way. There are only 180 days in the school year. Students who are here 96 percent of the time are missing more than a week of school. It means they’re learning less and that they can fall behind.” Echoing the research SI&A has gathered—while providing its A2A software-and-services product to assess the attendance /achievement correlative on well over a million students to date—Dr. Martinez says attendance is especially important in lower grades. “We’re committed to all children being able to read by the time they reach third grade,” he says. “These numbers tell the story of a student’s future in life if attendance isn’t



Photo: Dr. Steven Martinez and Bill McGuire

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addressed early on.”

Dr. Martinez says SI&A’s Achievement Initiative integrated nicely into Twin Rivers’ “Feel the Difference” campaign. “Originally, ‘Feel the Difference’ literally referred to our facility needs,” he explains. The classrooms in some of the District’s schools—Twin Rivers, the 28th largest school district in California, has four comprehensive high schools, five middle schools and 28 elementary schools—had serious heating and air conditioning deficiencies, now addressed and remedied. “As we moved along, we realized the ‘temperature’ in the class-

rooms also referenced the curriculum, the culture and how the District’s central offices should better empower and help its site leaders,” Dr. Martinez says.

In the first 44 days of school, SI&A has sent out more than 27,000 positive communication pieces on behalf of Dr. Martinez and over 6,000 attendance interventions (in six languages) to parents. These communication pieces promote the culture of “showing up” and aim to engage parents, “Our most important partners in this achievement campaign,” says Bill McGuire.

“We’ve emphasized the positive, because that’s the way change happens—and that’s what Dr. Martinez, Bill McGuire and their leadership embrace,” says Jeff Williams, founder and CEO of SI&A.

“We’re developing a culture where the expectation is, put simply, that you come to school,” says Dr. Martinez. “SI&A calls it a culture of showing up. That works for us.”

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