

Student accountability important

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Parents often don't know child isn't in school.

Keeping track of students who don't show up for school without a call from parents is something Lori Clymer takes seriously.

Clymer is school secretary at Gothenburg High School.

"Sometimes you think it's so routine but once in a while you're telling parents their child isn't at school and they don't know where they are," she explained.

A child who has run away from home or had an accident on a country road are all things that have and could happen.

"You always worry about the one time it's not okay and I might not have called the parent to let them know," Clymer said.

At the junior and senior high, Clymer is the one who fields calls from parents when their children won't be at school.

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That list is compared with students in first-period classes. Clymer then calls the parents of anyone unaccounted for with help from high school principal Randy Evans and junior high principal Ryan Groene.

“Parents sometimes assume their child is at school and he or she is not,” Evans said. “We then send over a police officer.”

State law mandates that school-aged students must attend school until at least age 16. If they decide to drop out, Evans said a parent must agree to it in writing.

Any student who misses school or even a period without a parental excuse must attend Saturday School or classes on designated Saturday mornings.

Those who are habitually truant, Evans said, must attend multiple Saturday schools—classes on designated Saturdays—or attend school for a certain number of days after the semester ends.

As far as asking police to check on absent students, Evans said that happens maybe twice a year.

“It’s really few and far between,” Groene said.

So far this school year, Evans said there have been two trancies at the high school level and none in junior high.

Jim Widdifeld, Dudley Elementary principal grades 3-6, said truancy isn’t considered a problem at the elementary.

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“We start contacting parents before students get to 10 absences in a semester,” Widdifield said.

During the 2008-09 school year, there were 10 trancies at the high school level.

Evans said he appreciates the cooperation of parents and their willingness to work with school officials when truancy situations occur.

“This community has a high expectation of education,” he said. “They want their children to receive a good one and attendance is part of that.”

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com 308-537-3636