

# Vision of a High-Quality Intense Student Support Network: Authentic Caring vs. Traditional Schooling

(Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006)

***. . . a ferocious unwillingness to allow a student to flounder  
or to fail.***

Caring adults, in a caring school community, are the link to achievement, graduation, and a future of meaningful options. This is particularly critical where students seem not to care about school or their future or for those who may lack confidence, or for those who may be alienated or marginalized educationally, emotionally, or socially for a multitude of reasons: prior school experiences; how they learn or do not learn; or because they are members of racially, ethnically, linguistically, socially, or economically disenfranchised populations. (Adapted from Murphy and Torres, 2014)

We believe . . .

- every student should feel welcomed into our school community
- every student has the right to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically;
- it is the district's responsibility to provide a system of delivery through which each student has the potential for high levels of success;
- all adults in our district can work collaboratively to establish a blanket of safety comprehensive enough to cover every space and every person in every school;
- each student reaches his/her potential as result of an equitable but not equal system of delivery, i.e., a system that responds to the unique and individual academic and non-academic needs of each student within its charge;
- each student must receive social, emotional, health, and nutritional support on a continuum of intensity that is matched to individual student need;
- each student's values, beliefs, individual backgrounds, and identity must be embraced and celebrated; and, finally,
- although "Technical improvements in teaching and curriculum are necessary, they are unlikely to be put to work for the benefit of students unless they are supported by a positive organizational climate, culture, or ethos" (Newmann et al., 1989).

At its core foundation, our district recognizes how critical it is to develop a meaningful, positive relationship with each student in order to exercise academic press and influence. Using Joseph Murphy's work with pastoral care as a guide, our district's Intense Student Support Network ensures that the norms of pastoral care positively impact every student our district has the privilege of serving. Those norms and identifying characteristics are:

1. **Care** - *Every adult supports every student with a ferocious unwillingness to allow a student to flounder or fail.*
2. **Support** - *For students to build confidence and willingness to invest themselves, their participation in academic tasks must be accompanied by personal support from teachers.*
3. **Safety** - *While expectations are clear, firm, and consistently enforced, action is centered on students as persons not simply as occupants of the institution of school. Students are seen as resources to be developed rather than as problems to be managed.*
4. **Membership** - *Engaging students in a variety of ways is fundamental so that they are not just physically present, but intellectually immersed, socially connected and emotionally centered.*

Recognizing that the core foundation of pastoral care may not be enough at any one time for all students, the district's vision includes support to students on a continuum of intensity matched to individual student need. This continuum of support may encompass a variety of nonacademic needs that may present themselves at any time: social, emotional, health, and nutritional needs as well as the impact of trauma on student learning, emotional health, behavior, and the ability to formulate meaningful relationships.

The Intense Student Support Network will engage with families to better connect students to the school community and will also work with community agencies to provide support in areas that may extend beyond the capacity of the district and school to provide alone. These areas include, but are not necessarily limited to the areas of social, emotional, health, behavioral, and nutritional needs of students.

Finally, the Intense Student Support Network will utilize its network delivery system for collecting data about and responding to student needs, connecting the student to the source of support, positively impacting student and adult relationships, and engaging the families and community in support of its students. In short, this Intense Student Support Network will ensure that our district is prepared to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students who belong to our district.