“Understanding why students drop out of school is the key to designing effective interventions to help solve this critical and costly problem. Yet identifying the causes of dropping out is extremely difficult. Like other forms of educational achievement, such as test scores and grades, dropping out of school is likely influenced by an array of factors.”

Russell Rumberger
Vice Provost, UCOP Education Partnerships

**March 15, 2012 Agenda**

1. Framing our Work
   - Juan Arambula, Task Force Chair
2. Breakdowns and Solutions
   - Michael E. Hanson, Superintendent
3. FUSD Enrollment and Attendance
   - Dave Calhoun, FUSD Research Evaluation and Assessment
4. Group work, discussions, next steps

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**Attendance: Current Reality in FUSD**

Students, families, schools, and the community each play a role in improving attendance. There are many challenges however, because not all students attend school; not all families get their children to school; there has been less involvement by law enforcement agencies; and there has been no coordinated effort by community organizations. Additionally there are gaps in Fresno Unified School District attendance practices.

Attendance is important, even for students in elementary school. A recent FUSD study found that kindergarten students with poor attendance performed lower on third grade reading and math tests than those with satisfactory attendance. On an average day, there may be as many as 1,000 period absences at an FUSD high school.

**Public Input to Inform Task Force**

**Real-Time Open Forum**

graduate@fresnounified.org
http://go.fresnounified.org/graduate

**Student Focus Groups**

Conversations with middle and high school students about the barriers to graduation and possible solutions

**Teacher Focus Groups**

Conversations with teachers about barriers to graduation and possible solutions

**Community Meetings**

Conversations with parents, families, and community members about barriers to graduation and possible solutions

Community meetings will be held during April and May. Check back soon for more information.

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**What the Research Says**

Research shows that students who miss as little as one day of school per month, regardless of the reason, are at risk of falling behind academically and are less likely to graduate. A Chicago study found that ninth grade attendance was a stronger predictor of graduation than eighth grade test scores. A study in Baltimore found that sixth graders with chronic absences were twice as likely to dropout as students who were not chronically absent.

Possible solutions to improve attendance include district practices that support and engage students, better communication with parents and the community, incentives for improving attendance, attendance teams at school sites, monitoring individual and groups of students, removing barriers kids face in getting to school, coordinating efforts with community organizations, and an informational campaign throughout the community.