

Building Successful Students

Creating Disciplinary Policies That Promote College

A Plan for Improving Roosevelt High School



United Students

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Table of Contents:

Proposal

Background	Page 2
Researching the Problem	Page 2
Roosevelt Learning Environment	Page 2
Major Findings	Page 3
Student Actions	Page 4
United Students' Recommendations	Page 5

Background: About United Students

United Students (US) at Roosevelt High School is a project of Inner-City Struggle (ICS). ICS is a community-based organization in Boyle Heights working to promote non-violent and healthy communities. US is a youth leadership program that provides opportunities for Roosevelt High students to create positive change in their school and community. Currently, US efforts at Roosevelt are focused on promoting school policies to ensure academic achievement for all students. The *United Students Plan for Improving the Quality of Education at Roosevelt High School (RHS)* is centered on increasing graduation rates and University of California and Cal State University eligibility rates. US efforts aim to bridge all school stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians to advocate for an equitable education.

Researching the Problem:

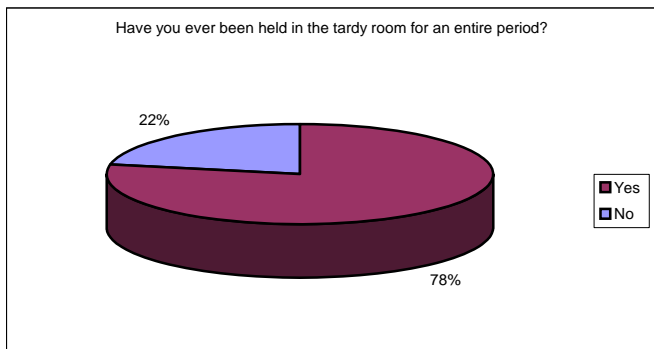
In the spring of 2002 United Students began a student-led research process to identify the main problems at Roosevelt and develop solutions. United Students distributed a survey to the RHS student body in classrooms, and collected surveys from 754 students. The student leaders analyzed US survey findings, RHS graduation and college eligibility rates, and two *L.A. Times* news articles which highlighted the impacts of the tardy room and the B-track policy within LAUSD. The survey administered by US asked RHS students their view of the effectiveness of the tardy room, the need for a culturally relevant curriculum, and access and support to information that fulfills college course requirements. US student leaders analyzed all the data to design an effective alternative policy to the tardy room.

Roosevelt Learning Environment:

The US research identified several factors that contribute to truancy and underachievement at RHS. The *L.A. Times* article featured on October 8, 2002, *The Bad Side of 'B-Tracks' Criticized*, pinpoints overcrowded conditions as leading to academic inequality due to the creation of a multi-track calendar. The article also finds B-track to encourage low performance because it has the most erratic schedule, the most inexperienced teachers and the fewest magnet and Advanced Placement courses available. The October 5, 2002, *L.A. Times* article, *Critics See Wasted Time in Punishment of Tardy Students*, states that schools have dropped the tardy room practice altogether, because such policies allow students to waste instructional time and avoid classes. The article also states that the tardy room was identified as faulty practice in state audit reports conducted last year at Roosevelt.

United Students survey findings also show that students are frustrated by overcrowded and under-funded school conditions. The problems highlighted by a majority of the students that filled out the survey were:

- Overcrowded conditions
- Lack of positive history about people of color
- Dirty and limited access to bathrooms
- Inconsistent accessibility to guidance counselors
- Not enough guidance counselors or college prep programs
- Year-round schedule
- Tardy room as a barrier to attending class



Major Findings:

The United Students research process found that the tardy room is ineffective in alleviating the problem of tardiness at Roosevelt High School.

1. Roosevelt High School has an average 68% disappearance rate. Roosevelt begins with an enormous freshmen class, which dramatically shrinks every school year by graduation time. An average 68% of each class disappears before they reach their senior year. (We use the term 'disappearance rate' because the official transfer and drop out rates do not account for this massive loss of students.)
2. According to state records, an average 35% of Roosevelt High School graduating seniors are UC/CSU eligible.¹
3. According to state records, an average 22% of Roosevelt High School graduating seniors go on to attend a UC or CSU.²
4. The tardy room contributes to truancy at Roosevelt. US survey data show the tardy room as contributing to student truancy. 53% of students surveyed by US have ditched class to avoid being held in the tardy room. 85% of students surveyed by US stated that the tardy room does not help them be on time. The *L.A. Times* article regarding the tardy room also states that the tardy room contributes to student truancy. In the article, Richard Alonzo, superintendent for local sub district F, which oversees some East Los Angeles schools, including Wilson High School, said "I don't believe you punish students who are late to class by taking them out of class."

¹Percentage is based on seniors that actually graduated not total senior class.

²Percentage is based on seniors that actually graduated not total senior class.

US Survey asked: What do you see as a big problem at RHS, that needs changing? Please Explain.

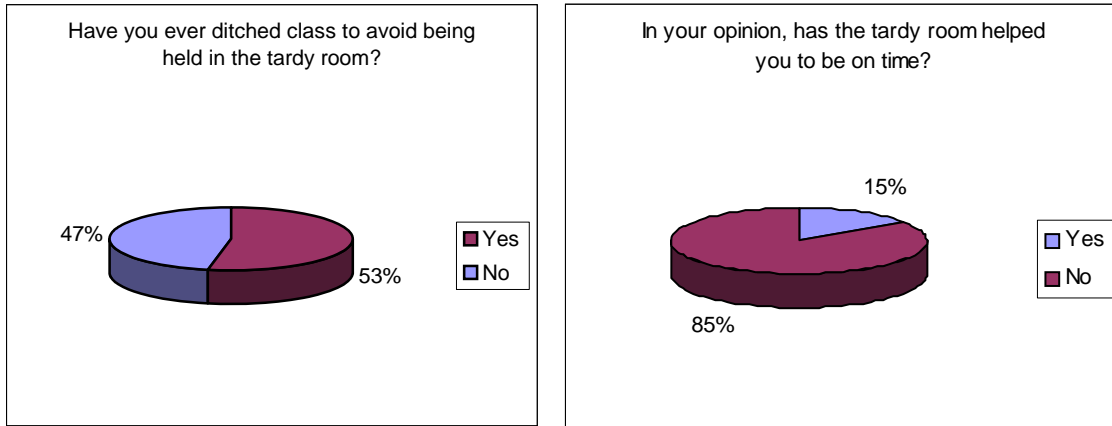
"The tardy room is taking our education instead of teaching us something they make us write things that make no [sense]."

"OVERCROWDING!!! I hate being in a [crowded] school. Teachers can't always pay attention to me."

"It's like we have to do it as if we were criminals or something. Therefore they send you to the tardy room and after they suspend you or possibly O.T. you, students prefer to just drop out."

"If we learn about our history its usually not even a paragraph long. I have not learned much about my history/culture I would like to learn more."

5. School conditions contribute to an environment that does not ensure academic achievement for all RHS students. A majority of RHS students surveyed by US, pointed to the tardy room as a factor in discouraging students from attending class.



Students Take Action

US recognizes that school conditions impact tardiness and low attendance. US created a plan for comprehensively improving student achievement at RHS through the elimination of the tardy room and implementation of a pro-active policy that addresses tardiness. US organized a Student Forum on October 4, 2002 to present the plan to administration and gain their support for student-initiated efforts to improve education at RHS. The principal, Ms. Cecilia Quemada agreed to support the efforts of United Students. Since the Forum, US leaders have focused on increasing student awareness in implementing an alternative to the tardy room policy. US is organizing students to become involved in improving their education. US's primary goal is to improve the quality of education at Roosevelt by improving student achievement. US efforts aim to replace punitive disciplinary policies with more preventative strategies for addressing discipline, implement Ethnic Studies courses, and raise graduation and college eligibility rates.

Dr. Klein's Tardy Policy Plan

The tardy policy proposed by Dr. Klein does not provide a preventative strategy for alleviating the problem of tardiness at Roosevelt. This plan utilizes measures that replicate the flaws of the current tardy policy. The sole reliance on a holding area and detentions hours only replicates previous strategies that have proven to be ineffective. This plan provides no long-term strategy for addressing the causes of tardiness and low attendance. The plan does not present any preventive measures to alleviate tardiness. No systematic follow-up is provided to assist students in attending class consistently after the parent conferences are conducted. Implementation of this plan will continue poor disciplinary practice that does not raise student achievement.

United Students Plan to Increase Student Achievement

The United Students' plan aims to proactively address improving attendance by re-defining **student achievement** based on graduation rates and UC/CSU eligibility rates. We understand that the terms of this plan are difficult to implement immediately, however, US believes that high expectations coupled with high levels of support lead to high academic achievement. As a first step, our aim is to eliminate the tardy room and replace it with a policy that supports student achievement and provides consequences for student tardiness. United Students recommends the following student driven plan that utilizes both prevention and intervention strategies for alleviating high rates of low attendance and tardiness:

1. Evaluate current policies, and include student body voices

- Assess effectiveness of Tardy Room policy by using United Students surveys.

Prevention Strategy

2. Expand Counselor/Student ratio to Increase Counselor Availability

There are currently 9 guidance counselors, 3 per track. An increase in counselors will ensure effectiveness of the alternative policy to the tardy room and college preparatory tracking for all students.

- Create additional 2 Counselor positions per track by 2003
- Create additional 5 Counselor positions per track by 2004

3. Develop and expand college prep programs that put students on a college track.

- Implement and expand programs that improve graduation rates and student achievement (Puente, Algebra Project, and AVID)

Intervention Strategy

4. Implement a pro-active alternative to the Tardy Room

- Teachers track student attendance and tardiness
- School monitor rate of student attendance and tardiness
- Students flagged based on extremity of tardiness (8)
- Counselors create action plan to address barriers to regular attendance and timeliness to classes
- Counselor meets with student and parent/guardian to develop action plan and implements state mandated (SBA13) to create four-year course plan
- Students that demonstrate lack of improvement in low attendance and timeliness to class are required to attend self-help classes after-school

Conclusion:

The United Students strategy will effectively present students with consequences to their recurring tardiness and provide resources to meet the expectations of a UC/CSU applicant. US is committed to supporting Roosevelt High School to become a school known for its commitment to academic excellence, success, and college preparation. We hope that our ideas will be taken into full consideration.