

## SCHOOL CASE RECOMMENDATION FORM

ECHO Session Date: 3/13/26

**Summary:** Small alternative school serving grades 6–12 with approximately 105 students and is currently facing low levels of parent and community engagement. School leadership believes this challenge stems partly from the nature of being an alternative school and partly from being a relatively new school that is still determining the most effective ways to communicate with families. To address the issue, the school has experimented with multiple communication strategies, including Facebook posts, messages through Infinite Campus, and letters sent by mail; however, parent involvement remains limited, indicating a need to identify more effective ways to connect with and engage families.

### **Recommendations:**

#### Strengths and Encouragement

- Payette Academy is already doing many positive things to support students and families.
- Shifting school culture in an alternative school setting takes time. This is particularly true when many students and families may have had difficult or negative past experiences with school.
- It is important to remind staff that meaningful culture changes happen gradually. Highlighting small wins and moments of progress can help maintain motivation and momentum.
- Continue trusting the work you are doing - building relationships and community takes patience, but the efforts being made are meaningful and impactful.

#### **Building Trust with Families**

- In alternative school settings, open and authentic communication with parents can help reduce feelings of judgment and build stronger relationships.
- When families feel that the school is approaching them with honesty and empathy, they may be more willing to share what is happening in their lives and seek support.
- Creating a culture where families feel safe talking about challenges can strengthen trust and increase ongoing communication.

#### **Making Engagement Personal**

- Personal gestures can go a long way in building relationships with students and families.
- For example, celebrating student successes in visible ways, such as placing a congratulatory sign in a student's yard, can show families that the school truly values their children.
- Small, meaningful connections often have a larger impact than formal engagement strategies alone.

#### **Encouraging Parent Participation**

- Sometimes families are more likely to get involved when they receive specific invitations rather than general requests for volunteers.
- Consider directly asking individual parents or community members to participate in certain activities or events. Personalized invitations can help families feel valued and more comfortable engaging with the school.

#### **Using Data to Inform Decisions**

- The Idaho Youth Well-being Survey is a valuable tool for understanding student experiences across multiple areas.
- In addition to measuring outcomes, the survey provides insight into risk and protective factors across different environments, including:
  - Family relationships

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- School climate
- Community supports
- Peer relationships
- Looking at the full picture across these factors can help the school better understand student needs and identify opportunities to strengthen connections with families and the community.

**Consider presenting follow-up for this patient case or any other patient cases at a future ECHO Clinic session.**

Shannon McDowell, Program Manager, [sfmcdowell@uidaho.edu](mailto:sfmcdowell@uidaho.edu), 208-364-9905