ATTENDANCE PLAN

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

2018-19

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Executive Summary

Daily attendance is vital to a students' academic success. While research substantiates the importance of teacher effectiveness on a student's academic success, the best teacher can only be effective if students are present in class. As supported by Michigan Department of Education (MDE), classroom attendance instills self-discipline, exposes students to group interactions and quality learning experiences (MDE, 2011). Regular attendance is essential to providing students with opportunities to learn and these opportunities are limited when students do not attend school.

> **Key Focus:**
>
> As daily attendance is expected in traditional school programs, school districts must create policy that articulate their expectations to students, parents and school officials.

Absenteeism also has a strong connection to academic achievement. Research suggests that students who attend school regularly demonstrate higher learning levels than those who do not have regular attendance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Specifically, students who miss 10% or more days each year are considered chronically absent and have lower achievement on standardized tests in reading and math than their peers who attend school regularly (United States Department of Education, 2016). Likewise a 2008 study of graduation data for Chicago Public Schools indicated that the number of days eighth grade students were absent was a greater predictor of ninth grade retention than eighth grade test scores (Allensworth, 2008).

In 2013-2014 the study of chronic absenteesim released by the USDOE revealed that 14% of the national student population was considered chronically absent, as compared to 57% in Detroit (USDOE, 2016). [i] In the past two years, chronic absenteeism continues to be a challenge as 55% of the enrolled population was considered chronically absent in 2016 and 56% in 2017 (Table 1). Table 1 further shows that while the percenage of chronically absent students has declined since 2012, the percentage remains sustainally higher than the national average.

School Year	Total Students	Chronically Absent Count	Not Chronically Absent Count	Chronically Absent Percent	Not Chronically Absent Percent	Attendance Rate (All Students)	Attendance Rate (Chronically Absent)	Attendance Rate (Not Chronically Absent)
2017	48888	27533	21355	56.32	43.68	84.98	76.44	95.08
2016	50262	27564	22698	54.84	45.16	85.4	76.71	95.01
2015	49126	31819	17307	64.77	35.23	85.58	79.88	N/A
2014	50593	33943	16650	67.09	32.91	85.16	79.92	N/A
2013	51107	34502	16605	67.51	32.49	86.1	81.35	N/A
2012	72875	51348	21527	70.46	29.54	80.94	78.12	N/A

Table 1

Research further suggests that students of color are more chronically absent than their white counterparts, while students with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent (USDOE, 2016). The need to improve attendance is paramount to individual student success and the overall improvement of the District. The misison to educate and empower every student

everyday and the priority of outstanding achievement becomes increasingly more difficult when students are not in school.

Just as in 2014, Detroit had the largest percentage (54%) of students who were chronically absent, the recently released NAEP data further supports the importance of school attendance. The data demonstrates that District students severely lag behind their grade level peers in other comparable cities.

- In fourth-grade math, 4% of Detroit students scored at or above proficient, compared with 36% statewide, 31% in large cities and 40% nationwide for public school students.
- In fourth-grade reading, 5% of Detroit students scored at or above proficient, compared with 32% statewide, 28% in large cities and 35% nationwide for public school students.
- In eighth-grade math, 5% of Detroit students scored at or above proficient, compared with 31% statewide, 27% in large cities and 33% nationwide for public school students.
- In eighth-grade reading, 7% of Detroit students scored at or above proficient, compared with 34% statewide, 27% in large cities and 35% nationwide for public school students.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The Michigan Revised School Code addresses attendance and provides areas of support and strength for local school districts. The compulsory attendance requirement provides an expectation that students aged 6 to 16 maintain enrollment in an educational program. Local attendance officers are deputized to ensure students and families are adhering to these school attendance laws. At the start of the 2017-2018 school year, there were eighteen district-based attendance agents and thirty-three schools with one or more attendance agent. The city of Detroit has also established city ordinances related to attendance and truancy that provide sanctions to businesses that serve minors during school hours. Further, the presence of organizations such as City Year, Attendance Works, Youth Development Commission, Urban Neighborhood Initiatives (UNI), Brightmoor Alliance and The Skillman Foundation have identified attendance as a major lever in raising student achievement thus providing support to students who have been identified as chronically absent.

With the rate of chronically absent students in the district hovering around 64%, an identifiable weakness is sustaining the personnel necessary to address the ever present issue. As less than half of the District schools have access to an attendance agent, funding has been identified to place an agent in each school. Most research related to improving attendance begins with the need for accurate data. The current data collection system and collection process do not allow for accurate data to be collected, monitored or authentically analyzed. The compulsory age for attendance serves as a strength and a barrier as early patterns of absenteeism are not often addressed because children are not required to attend school until age 6. Lastly, the absence of a curriculum aligned to the standards with increasing rigor and engagement has led students to

be uninspired instructionally. This leads to disengagement and a deterrent to attend school daily. The newly adopted K-8 curriculum for reading and math is highly aligned to the standards and will challenge students daily.

With a lack of viable systems to address attendance at the foundational level, opportunities for districtwide attendance reform exists. The development of early warning response and monitoring systems to identify at-risk students and create individualized support is critical to improving attendance. An early warning and response system would provide the data necessary to allow for a comparative analysis of the correlation between factors such as attendance, grades, discipline, etc. and their impact on student achievement. Having a platform that would allow for multi-dimensional analysis will offer an opportunity to use District data to present information to students, parents, school based staff and the community to increase awareness of the long term effects of poor attendance.

In an effort to reduce the percentage of students who are chronically absent and increase the number of schools that achieve a daily attendance rate of 95%, the District will implement strategies that:

ALIGN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
Establish District policies and procedures that support daily attendance

INCREASE PARENT AND STUDENT CONNECTIONS
Improve communication strategies with parents and students

IMPROVE WRAPAROUND SERVICES
Expand partnerships that support alleviating barriers to student attendance

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS
Establish process to collect attendance data

ALIGNED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

As daily attendance is expected in traditional school programs, school districts must create policy that articulate their expectations to students, parents and school officials. Within the Michigan framework students are considered "in attendance" if they attend school or a school related event for any portion of the day.

ALIGNING SCHOOL PRACTICE TO DISTRICT POLICY
ADOPTING AN ATTENDANCE POLICY
The District promotes the importance of regular attendance to enable students to achieve academic success. Developing a comprehensive attendance policy will provide schools with a clear outline of the processes. Principals and school staff will play an important role with implementing and reinforcing shared expectations with students and parents. Research suggests that having a school attendance policy outlining research based practices strategies will help create a culture conducive to learning which will better engage students in the learning process. Likewise, policy is being reviewed to address students who come to school late and are picked up from school early which often disrupts the learning environment and impedes

individual student success. For increased accountability staff, parents and students will be trained on this expectation and data will be reviewed and shared with school communities through parent conferences and other engagement opportunities.

REVISING THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Out of school suspension is a school factor that impacts daily attendance. The recently revised Student Code of Conduct ("Code") will remove school imposed factors that increase absenteeism such as out of school suspension for dress code violations, tardies, etc. Students will be provided Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies (PBIS) that include Restorative Practices in lieu of more punitive disciplinary measures. Through the use of the Code students will have increased opportunities to modify their behaviors with the support of a caring adult trained in Restorative Practices. Professional development will be provided for principals, assistant principals, teachers and other support personnel on understanding the Code and how it should be implemented.

MILESTONES
- Adopt Attendance Policy – June 2018
- Adopt Student Code of Conduct – June 2018

INCREASE PARENT AND STUDENT CONNECTIONS

Developing productive school–family–community connections has become one of the most commonly embraced policy initiatives in schools and school districts (Kesler, Sklar and Baker, 2000). In mid-October the eighteen district-based agents were reassigned to schools in which chronic absenteeism had shown an increase based on 2016-2017 school data.   The reassignment allowed almost half of the District's schools to have daily support from an onsite attendance agent. Since that time, over 2,900 attendance agent parent conferences have been conducted through phone call or home visits. In addition, 17 students have been adjudicated. Fifteen cases have been submitted to the Wayne County Truancy Intervention Program (T.I.P) with more than 50% of those cases showing improvements in daily attendance. Responsiveness by parents has been noted by attendance agents as having reported less than 5% of parents as resistant or unresponsive. More than half of the parents contacted have requested follow-up conferences to assist with monitoring daily attendance. This request puts the district in a position to remain proactive with parents and provide the opportunity to offer additional wrap around services when observed or requested. To further support this improvement and intensive support, each school will have an attendance agent on staff beginning the 2018-2019 school year.

ESTABLISHING PROTOCOLS THAT FOSTER INTERACTION
INCREASING STAFF THAT SUPPORT ATTENDANCE

For the 2018-2019 school year, support staff will be increased at the school site to further combat the attendance challenge. Each school will be assigned a Dean of Culture, attendance agent and guidance counselor or social worker. The faculty members will be key in identifying students having attendance concerns and initiating and monitoring the Attendance Intervention Plan.   Each of these key faculty

members will be provided training in Restorative Practices and the Attendance Intervention Plan process and expected to maintain consistent communication with parents of students with an AIP.

CREATE AN ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION PLAN
Each school will also establish a Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies (PBIS) Team that will create a PBIS Plan which will include strategies for improving school and individual student attendance metrics and monitoring the progress of individual students. This school-wide progress monitoring plan will assist in the tracking of student data and identification of early signs of attendance concerns. The PBIS Team will development school-wide incentives to recognize students for appropriate and improved attendance.

Professional development opportunities will be provided to district support staff to ensure school-based stakeholders are assisted with problem solving strategies and supported with implementing district policies and procedures. District support staff will also support schools to ensure progress monitoring plans are being used to track attendance.

Improved procedures around parent notification of attendance concerns is key to decreasing the percentage of students who are chronically absent. Using a 3-6-9 approach, contact with the parent will be documented by the student's teacher upon the third absence. Within the District, attendance agents, are hired and assigned to schools to support students who struggle with attending school on a regular basis. At day six of absence, the student will be referred to the attendance agent for intervention, which may include home visits, meeting with parents or daily and check-in monitoring with student. In most instances this level of intervention will provide the necessary wrap-around services to assist students with attending school. Once a student receives nine absences within a school year a truancy referral will be submitted to the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office for additional intervention and an Attendance Intervention Plan will be initiated and monitored at the school site by the attendance agent and school team. Once a month attendance data will be reviewed by the Assistant Principal responsible for attendance with the Executive Director of the Office of Climate and Culture to ensure necessary monitoring.

Unexcused days absent	Follow up required
1-5 days	Parent contact by teacher
6 days	Intervention by attendance agent: Home visit, daily check-in monitoring, meeting with parents
7-8 days	Intervention by attendance agent: Home visit, daily check-in monitoring, meeting with parents
9 days	Intervention by attendance agent: Attendance Intervention Plan developed and implemented

STUDENT AND FAMILY INCENTIVES
A comprehensive approach to provide incentives to students and families will be developed to address significant challenges to improve attendance. Research has demonstrated that providing incentives school-wide creates a culture where students increase their attendance (Hanover, 2013). The National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) data, disclosed that

student outcomes were related to the student's sense of belongingness or connection to the school (Lochmiller, 2013). Incentivized PBIS programs will be developed to establish a culture where students feel a sense of belonging and encourage students to attend school.

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Data collection is the foundation of monitoring student attendance, however, the current data collection process is flawed. Various staff members input attendance that triggers additional actions. Data is extrapolated to the state's data base and utilized to determine data trends within the District. A comparison of the extrapolated data and what can be accessed through the SIS, MISTAR has proven not to be the same, yet an explanation is not available for the difference. If data collection is not dependable the follow up will not have the merit and thus not the intended impact on attendance. Efforts to ensure accurate record keeping, progress monitoring and staff training will impact overall attendance processes.

ENSURING ACCURATE RECORD KEEPING

Teachers are primarily responsible for taking daily attendance. In the instance of a teacher absence or teacher vacancy clerical staff are responsible for inputting daily attendance. After inputting data, clerical staff is generally responsible for identifying patterns of absence and referring students with attendance concerns to the appropriate school personnel, usually an attendance agent. Teachers are able to send "attendance checks" for students through the MISTAR system who have been absent from school. Attendance agents are to investigate the absences, interact with parents and send notifications to the teacher and school once complete. This process should update the student's attendance record and cause the absence to be coded properly. The system can be an effective one when used appropriately. Assigning attendance agents to school sites will provide an individual to own the attendance review process.

PROGRESS MONITORING

District staff will use the MISTAR system daily to generate a report of teachers who have not taken attendance. This report will be provided to principals and principal leaders for appropriate follow up. Parents will receive an automated attendance call if students are not in class. Additional focus will be given at the school level to verify that attendance data has been accurately collected so parents can have better reliance on the calls they receive.

Weekly, attendance agents will receive a report of students who have been absent for at least 3 days, with a teacher contact log for parent notice. Through a weekly check-in process, attendance agents will make contact with students who have been designated as chronically absent and logs will be provided to the Office of Climate and Culture for review.

During monthly attendance agent meetings, staff will review individual school data and discuss strategies that are showing the greatest improvement. Attendance agent notes will be reviewed weekly through MISTAR and Attendance Intervention Plans will be submitted for additional monitoring. To further support the importance of attendance, principals will share attendance date through principal meetings, data chats, PTA and SAC meetings.

TRAINING ON EXPECTATIONS

All staff will be trained on the adopted Attendance Policy and the administrative guidelines that will be used to implement the policy. Teachers and clerical staff will review the data input process and principals will provided accountability protocols for ensuring accuracy. Attendance agents will be trained on both the attendance collection process as well as the use of attendance notes within MISTAR. Simultaneously they will review the process for conducting Attendance Intervention Team meetings with parents/guardians and setting goals with students who are chronically absent.

IMPROVE WRAPAROUND SERVICES

As part of the District's whole child commitment, wraparound services will be provided to address social and non-academic barriers to attendance. When students' health and wellness needs are attended to they are able to attend school and engage in the learning process. Offering supportive services to children and families who struggle will encourage daily attendance. Through coordination with community agencies, programs will be identified to ensure that students and families have access to services that will meet their immediate and/or ongoing needs. Research has identified when schools provide wrap around services that students' attendance, grade point average, and academic achievement increased (Jones, 2014).

As a focus for wraparound services, students will be identified as chronically absent or in jeopardy of being chronically absent. An Attendance Intervention Plan will be developed in conjunction with the school, parent, student and community partner, where applicable. The plan will be reviewed for improvement and students who are meeting goals will be recognized and others will require additional intervention through attendance agents and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) staff, where applicable.

Schools will share attendance data, goals, interventions and growth through monthly PTA and SAC meetings. Likewise, schools will post monthly attendance data in a visiblel location in the school as well as attendance progress. Business Partners will be encouraged to provide incentives for students and parents who meet attendance goals, with a particular emphasis on students who earn quarterly perfect attendance.

Wraparound services will be addressed using a tiered approach:

Tier	Number of Unexcused Absences	Support
Tier 1	1-3	Teacher
Tier 2	3-9	School support: Teacher, Dean, Attendance Agent Community Partner: DHHS Staff, Attendance Works, Brightmoor, City Year
Tier 3	Chronically absent from the previous school year and 9 or more current school year	Attendance Agent, DHHS Staff, Wayne County

INCREASE COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Absenteeism should be viewed as a community problem. All agencies should work in conjunction with the District to ensure students are present in school.

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) workers will be provided the list of all students who were chronically absent the previous school year and when students are absent for the 6th day in the current school year. The DHHS worker will serve as a part of the Attendance Intervention Team and will be utilized to provide additional support to students and families as necessary.

Through support from School Based Health Centers (SBHC) and other community health partners, staff will contact students who have attendance issues to provide support with preventative care to proactively address health concerns.

Staff will meet with community partners who are supporting attendance initiatives to review monitoring and implementation expectations for Attendance Intervention Team meetings. Professional development will be provided to parents and community members on how to track and monitor attendance. In addition, parents and community members will be encouraged to participate in school functions as it relates to improving attendance.

ALIGNED STUDENT FOCUS

The attendance plan will be aligned to meeting the needs of students who struggle with absenteeism. The focus will be to improve student attendance averages by systematically implementing supportive interventions that will address attendance problems such as consecutive absences, tardiness, in and out of school truancy, suspension and expulsion. The PBIS team will use a tiered intervention structure to establish expectations and positive school culture to increase student attendance and will work with partner organizations to address the same.

QUARTERLY TASK FORCE SESSIONS

Through The Office of Climate and Culture, an Attendance Task Force, made of up parents, students, community partners, district and school staff, will be developed to discuss consistently analyze attendance data. A quarterly Task Force session will be held to discuss improvement and next steps. The Task Force will monitor progress of systems put in place to address attendance by providing feedback on district data.

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