CPS Attendance and Truancy  Issue 2 Vol 1 December 2014
Office of College and Career Success/Student Support and Engagement

Important Dates to Remember:

December 15th/19th: Pre-Winter Break—Plan “can’t miss” activities to keep students engaged at school; ensure robust instruction/exams so students do not start the Winter Break early.

January 5th: School is back in session—Make sure your marquee messages the first day back. Set robo-callers to remind families of starting off the new year right by coming back on time on the very first day.

Best Practice Sharing from Network 4’s Prescott Elementary

Strategically Plan for Low Attendance Weeks:

The school year calendar does not always make it easy for schools to maintain momentum around attendance. For instance, in the first two weeks of November this year, there were no classes on November 7th, then it was the weekend, then classes were back in session that Monday the 10th, then there were no classes Tuesday due to Veteran’s Day and then Report Card Pick Up had elementary students off on Wednesday and high school students off on Thursday. Suffice it to say, it was difficult to maintain attendance.

Prescott Elementary combated this challenging school schedule by planning their Picture Day for the Monday before Veteran’s Day and Report Card Pick-Up. On November 10th, the school had a 95.82% attendance rate! The District elementary schools averaged 93.49% attendance on the very same day. Principal Roche has employed this strategy for about a decade. Thank you for sharing!

Consider this as you plan for the following year, or for events that are still in the planning stages. If it is not a Picture Day, perhaps it is an assembly, a Cap and Gown fitting, or a dance.

Celebrating our Wins!

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! The District as a whole entered November with 95% attendance overall—this is the first time in 4 years.

What is the required response? An Unable to Locate Process (formerly known as the Lost Child Process) must be followed; exhaust all available phone numbers, make every effort to meet with the student’s family; mail a certified 10 day letter, conduct a home visit, and file an Unable to Locate/Lost Child form.

What is the best practice response?

- Utilize your at-risk and high-risk Dashboard indicators to proactively intervene with the students who are trending towards chronic status.
- Determine if there are attending siblings who can shed light into the situation or provide working numbers.
- Engage all adults listed as emergency contacts.
- Engage the MTSS model; what Tier 3 interventions should be employed?
- Is this student part of a priority group? Does the Case Manager have insight? Does the STLS liaison have insight? Does the Bilingual Coordinator have insight?

Unfortunately, not all students can be re-engaged, but the critical step is to watch for the signs of disengagement. Early intervention is often easier than re-engagement.

A Frequently Asked Question of A&T:

Question: Can a student be dropped from enrollment due to excessive absences?

Answer: No, students cannot be dropped due to excessive absences. (continue with “What is the required response?”)

Phoenix Academy’s Principal Wipachit receiving the 95+% attendance banner from Service Leadership Chief Col. Kelley.
Best Practice Sharing from Network 1’s Roosevelt High School

Using the Student Portal as a Strategy
Roosevelt High School is rallying their students and staff around a shared campaign. Principal Vazquez-Vialva reaches out to her 1353 students weekly to encourage them to use their email. They began the Rough Riders—the school mascot—Connects Campaign this year. Below was their first communication.

Happy December 1st Fabulous Rough Riders!
Today, launches Rough Riders Connects Campaign! We want ALL students to read their CPS email at least once daily (more times a day is an added bonus)!

We want to help you make a habit of reading your CPS email for a few reasons....

#1 We are starting a "Rough Riders Hidden Treasure Hunt" right now and you will need to read your email to get the clue for a prize

#2 We really believe in communicating with all students every week via email, Facebook and Twitter and we want you to communicate with us too

#3 We want to get you in the habit of using your CPS email account (I suggest you get a private email account too) for college correspondences, scholarship applications, service learning, work opportunities and more.

Find the clue at school and bring it to the Main Office; you have until Friday. You must provide your name and email address to receive your prize.

So far the reception has been very strong.

Resources:
- Did schools review their monthly attendance report and priority group deep dive report?
- Did your school review the webinar on how to maximize the benefits of the new Attendance Dashboard Page? Webinar link: https://sites.google.com/a/cps.edu/1357924465/home

Please reach out with questions, suggestions, and items to share; ZAMohammed@cps.edu. Thank you for being such great collaborative partners!
Incentives-based Programs Should be Low in Cost and Build Community:

Ashburn Elementary shared that they were really focused on building a strong attendance culture at their school. They not only wanted to encourage individual students, but they wanted classes and their families to feel invested in attendance achievement. Principal Diaz shared that “Ashburn believes that the key element of improving our student attendance and meeting our goal of having over 95% attendance rate this year is to improve the school climate to ensure that Ashburn School is a place where students want to be.” With that, they created the program they shared below:

**2014-2015 Ashburn Attendance Incentive/Reward Program**

Attendance policies are discussed at the start of school. Attendance policies are posted in every classroom. Attendance policies are also posted in the faculty/staff handbook and on the school’s website.

**Classroom Perfect Attendance Rewards:**
- Classrooms with Perfect Attendance for the month receive a gift for the teacher, the students, and a photo of the class for “bragging rights” for the month.
- Individual students receive a “Student of the Month” Certificate, a pencil for Perfect Attendance and a “Perfect Attendance Button”.
- At the end of the year, all honored students and their parents get a Banquet of Honor with certificates, trophies, a buffet dinner, and dance to celebrate their attendance.

**Incentives may include, but are not limited to:**
- Breakfast/Lunch with Principal and/or Assistant Principal
- Dance/Karaoke
- Ice Cream, Pizza or Popcorn Social
- Out-of-Uniform Passes (Nothing Inappropriate)
- No Homework Passes
- Extra Recess Time
- Pencils, Perfect Attendance Necklaces, Bracelets, etc.

Bennett Elementary has created a unifying display to emphasize the importance of attendance and the school’s collective goal of 96+%. Their bulletin board—designed by Mrs. Winifred Gonnigan, Bennett’s Clerk—provides transparency, and is located near the front entrance of the school.

The bulletin board displays each classroom’s student attendance % by month for all stakeholders to view—students, parents, visitors. Classrooms create a positive competitive spirit, and school visitors embrace the shared information. Thank you Principal Huggins and AP Talley for sharing your best practice!
Best Practice Sharing from Network 11’s Sherwood Elementary

Relationships are Key to a Proactive Attendance Response:

At Sherwood Elementary, a neighborhood and welcoming school, Ms. McGeehe, the Clerk, has built great relationships with students and their families. She is in constant communication with parents who will call her (if she has not already called them) to inform her of any issues that may hinder attendance. Ms. McGeehe is always ready and willing to help while still focusing parents on getting students to school in the midst of situations that may otherwise keep them out.

She also keeps a list of monthly birthdays to do birthday acknowledgements over the intercom, which students love.

They finished at 95.01% for SY14 and currently have an attendance rate of 97.1%!

Students at Simpson Academy pose at the perfect attendance luncheon. Congratulations!

Best Practice Sharing from Network 13

Network 13 is very proud of their New Year Attendance Challenge. The purpose of the competition is to encourage students to return back to school after Winter Break on Monday, January 5, 2015.

The school with the highest attendance % on January 5th at or over 95.0% will win a surprise concert assembly. The one day challenge levels the playing field for all Network 13 Schools. Only the students present on January 5th will be allowed to attend the concert.

Network 13 Schools’ Student Attendance % dropped in November, thus making it necessary to devise a Network plan to assist schools in getting back on track.

Great way to rally Network 13!