



Every Day Matters

Attend today. Achieve tomorrow.



OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES ATTENDANCE TOOLKIT

GUIDE TO TPS ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES • SCHOOL-BASED STRATEGIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

District Policy.....	3
Strategies and Incentives.....	4
Attendance Team Assignments.....	5
Protocol at a Glance.....	6
Intervention Strategies.....	7
Tiers of Intervention.....	8
Truancy Court Referrals.....	14
Attendance Improvement Plan.....	15

District Policy
5200- ATTENDANCE (M)

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In accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25, every parent, guardian, or other person having control and custody of a child between the ages of six and sixteen shall cause the child to regularly attend school. The Board of Education requires students enrolled in the school district attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State.

In accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6 and for the purposes of this Policy and Regulation 5200, a student's absence from school will be excused, or unexcused that counts toward truancy.

Students that are absent from school for any reason are responsible for the completion of assignments missed because of their absence. A student who is absent from school for observing a religious holiday shall not be deprived of any award, eligibility, or opportunity to compete for any award, or deprived of the right to take an alternate test or examination that was missed because of the absence provided there is a written excuse of such absence signed by the parent.

Prolonged or repeated absences, excused or unexcused, from school or from class, deprive students of the educational and classroom experiences deemed essential to learning and may result in retention at grade level or loss of credit or removal from a course that would count toward

the high school diploma in accordance with policies of this Board.

Students shall be subjected to the school district's response for unexcused absences that count toward truancy during the school year as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6(a)4 and Regulation 5200.

Unexcused absences from school or from classes within the school day may subject a student to consequences that may include the denial of a student's participation in co-curricular activities and/or athletic competition. Repeated absences from school interfere with efforts of this Board and its staff in the maintenance of good order and the continuity of classroom instruction and such absences may result in the removal of the student from a class or course of study.

The Superintendent shall calculate and monitor the average daily attendance rate for the district and for each school in the district. Whenever the average daily attendance rate does not meet the New Jersey Department of Education requirements the Superintendent or designee shall develop a district improvement plan to improve student attendance pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.2.

N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14; 18A:38-25
N.J.S.A. 34:2-21.1 et seq.
N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-7.6; 6A:32-8.3

Adopted: 16 May 2011
Revised: 22 June 2015

SUGGESTED ATTENDANCE STRATEGIES AND INCENTIVES

- ✚ Plan an Attendance Pep Rally each marking period
- ✚ Lunch/Breakfast with an Administrator
- ✚ Student led bulletin board creation
- ✚ Game Day
- ✚ “Poppin’ for Popcorn” Celebration
- ✚ Hot Chocolate and Pajamas
- ✚ Recognition Announcements
- ✚ “Chalk the Walk”
 - Allowing classes with best attendance to decorate sidewalks surrounding school
- ✚ Students with fewer than two absences can enter end-of semester drawing for prizes
- ✚ Class in each grade level with the best attendance receives:
 - Ice Cream or Pizza Party
- ✚ Mentoring/Coaching with identified school staff
 - Pair with students to provide encouragement and advisement

** Additional resources and information for prevention and intervention of attendance challenges can be found at www.attendanceworks.com.*

** Visit www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Attendance-Playbook.pdf to review the Attendance Playbook that details practical strategies that have been shown to improve attendance.*

RECOMMENDED ATTENDANCE TEAM ASSIGNMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

PERSON	GENERAL ATTENDANCE RESPONSIBILITIES
Principal/Vice Principal	<p>Weekly check-ins with attendance team members.</p> <p>Identify attendance best practices – additional resources can be found at www.attendanceworks.com.</p> <p>Ensure teachers are submitting attendance data daily and timely.</p> <p>Select designee to correct absent inputs that should reflect tardy.</p>
Attendance Officer	<p>Monitor assigned school data.</p> <p>Perform home visits for non-responsive families.</p>
Parent Liaison	<p>Track parent – school contact (phone calls, meetings, mailings).</p> <p>Conduct daily parent reach out for Tier I and Tier II students.</p> <p>Conduct proactive attendance strategies.</p> <p>Launch proactive school-based attendance campaign.</p>
Guidance Counselor	<p>Provide resources to families in crisis (i.e. food insecurity, housing resources, counseling).</p> <p>Conduct attendance recognition events.</p>
Nurse	<p>Conduct parent reach out for students who are absent due to medical concerns.</p>
CST Member(s) <i>(as needed)</i>	<p>Provides support and review for students with an IEP.</p>

TPS PROTOCOL AT A GLANCE

NOTE:

- Truancy court hearings are reserved for *true* cases of chronic truancy and/or educational neglect.
- Attendance Teams will receive court dates and outcomes as they become available.
- Linking families with resources to eliminate barriers is the primary goal of the Attendance Improvement Plan.
- All intervention efforts should be documented in PowerSchool.

1-4 ABSENCES

SCHOOL LEVEL

- Daily attendance input via PowerTeacher and call to parent/guardian
- Tardy corrections daily
- Warning Notice mailed to parent/guardian

10+ ABSENCES

OFFICE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT

Referral to Truancy Court (age 6-16):

- 10+ absences (excluding hardships)
- Documentation in PowerSchool
- Attendance Improvement Plan complete

5-9 ABSENCES

ATTENDANCE TEAM

- Intervention Meeting with family at school
 - Verbal & written request to parent (3x)
- Develop Attendance Improvement Plan
- Link to community resources
- If parent fails to show after 3 attempts - Home visit & 5 Day Legal Notice (Attendance Officer)

ATTENDANCE TEAM INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The role of the suggested school-based attendance team is to take the lead on facilitating and coordinating community resources and to implement intervention strategies to reduce student absenteeism. The following strategies are suggested to address student absences:

Use ALL methods of communication when attempting to contact a parent/guardian:

- ✚ Call **ALL** available telephone numbers listed in PowerSchool (including emergency contacts)
 - Ensure that PowerSchool information is updated as needed for the most reliable information
 - If numbers are disconnected/unavailable – this should be noted in PowerSchool
- ✚ Send “Warning Notice” mailings to the address listed in PowerSchool
 - Enter student’s profile – Select ‘Print a Report’ – Select ‘Elementary Attendance Letter’ from ‘What Report to Print’ dropdown menu – Click Submit
 - Letters that are ‘Returned to Sender’ should be noted in PowerSchool to queue Attendance Officer home visit.
- ✚ Send email when an email address is available
- ✚ A selected designee of the school-based attendance team will schedule parent meetings at the school as needed to develop Attendance Improvement Plan.
- ✚ For students with an IEP – include a member of the Child Study Team to provide appropriate support.
- ✚ School leader to implement a system and select a designee to adjust late arrivals daily to change any absences that have been recorded in PowerSchool to tardy.

Organize a system to collect any documentation that is provided to support an absence:

- ✚ A note from a medical/psychiatric facility
- ✚ Documentation for a court system
- ✚ Documentation to support the observance of a religious holiday

TIERS OF INTERVENTION TO REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENCE

OVERVIEW

This hand out is intended to help a school or district think about alignment between its strategies and level of student need. The list of strategies is not exhaustive but suggestive and intended to inspire your own ideas about what could be in place.

STRATEGIES

The columns represent three tiers of strategies. Tier I Strategies are Universal Strategies that should be available to every student in a school building. Tier II Strategies are aimed at early intervention and designed to help students who need slightly more support to avoid chronic absence. Tier III Strategies are intensive supports offered to the students facing the greatest challenges to getting to school. Our assumption is that all levels of strategies involve some level of these core ingredients: A. Monitor data, B. Engage students and families, C. Recognize good and improved attendance, D. Provide personalized outreach and E. Remove barriers.

LEVELS OF STUDENT NEEDS

This chart assumes that students can be divided into tiers reflecting the level of anticipated need for supports:

- ✚ **Tier 1** = students whose good attendance could be maintained and cultivated as long as the universal, prevention oriented supports are in place.
- ✚ **Tier 2** = students who have a past history of moderate chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school) or face a risk factor (e.g. a chronic illness like asthma) which makes attendance more tenuous and need a higher level of more individualized support in addition to benefiting from the universal supports.
- ✚ **Tier 3** = students with several levels of chronic absence (missing 20% or more of school in the past year or during the first month of school) and/or face a risk factor (like involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system, homelessness or having a parent who has been incarcerated).

** Used with permission from Attendance Works.*

	TIER 1 Missing Less than 10% of School	TIER 2 At Risk of Missing 10-19% of Days	TIER 3 At Risk of Missing 20% or more Days
A. Monitor Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Create a school team that regularly reviews attendance data for trends for all students and identify how many and which students fall into the different tiers of needed support » Establish a school plan for reducing chronic absence based on an analysis of strengths and challenges around school climate and attendance practice » Use qualitative and quantitative data to identify common barriers to attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review attendance every week for students who are chronically absent or at risk of chronic absence (due to chronic absence in the past or existence of a health challenge such as asthma). Look for patterns in attendance » Look for qualitative data to assess the underlying cause for a student’s continued absences » Evaluate whether students with persistent chronic absence need an appropriate tier 3 response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identify which and how many students have a history of missing 20% or more of school and or at risk due to other major challenges (involvement in child welfare, juvenile justice, homelessness etc.) » Review attendance daily and ensure that Tier III students are in school each day. Follow up on each absence for each student identified for tier III intervention
B. Engage students and parents	<p>Create a school climate that encourages students to come to school everyday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Provide an engaging curriculum that draws students to school » Keep school clean and clear of health hazards that contribute to asthma and respiratory disease » Cultivates an atmosphere where students feel respected and safe 	<p>Provide information and attention that underscores concern for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Call or send letter to alert family to attendance concerns and explore what help may be needed. (If possible, use a nurse to make contact especially for student with a medical condition) » Suggest a home visit and/or conference to 	<p>Assess student and family needs and intensify outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Determine if the student and their family is or should be agency involved. If they are, work to set up a meeting to coordinate services » Refer students and families to appropriate service agencies e.g. social services, human resources,

<p>B. Engage students and parents (Continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Offer programs before and after school to engage students » Provide enrichment activities for students, such as field trips, assemblies, and dances <p>Create a welcoming culture of attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Greet students and families at the door in the morning » Reinforce positive, welcoming experience in the front office » Create visuals (bulletin boards, banners, posters) that reflect attendance messaging and modify during the year to sustain impact » Explain expectations for attendance, and how absences can add up, in back-to-school materials and at events » Tell parents how to report an absence » Ensure that your school has opportunities for parental engagement and involvement including organized parent groups, learning at home, and volunteer opportunities <p>Provide activities that engage students and families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Offer opportunities for before and after school programs at the school 	<p>address barriers to attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Use the Student Attendance Success Plan to help develop family strategies to support improved attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Provide parents with family-friendly, easy-to-understand information and/or assistance in reaching out to social services or community resources that may be helpful in addressing barriers identified » Help parents understand and avoid legal consequences of extreme chronic absence » Nurture teacher interest and capacity in helping to reach out to chronically absent students and their families <p>Identify and provide for family needs e.g. food pantry, clothing assistance, and literacy programs</p> <p>Maintain contact with family to ensure they are receiving needed support.</p> <p>Identify academic needs of the student and develop a plan to</p>	<p>counseling, housing, and health services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Work with relevant agencies to develop a comprehensive educational plan that also address student and family needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Share data with appropriate agencies and ensure that agencies are using chronic absence as a must respond to indicator » Work with families to avoid legal consequences to the extent possible <p>If necessary, leverage the power of the courts to involve families and students in needed services and interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Determine if the Courts have access to additional programs or services that would assist the family in overcoming barriers to attendance <p>Work to ensure that the student is connected to positive supports and programs, e.g. mentoring</p> <p>Utilize lessons learned from working with families</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Offer field trips, dances, assemblies, book fairs and other activities » Call when students miss school to express concern » Welcome students back and identify any academic support needed. 	<p>provide appropriate tutoring and coaching services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Determine if the student has make up work that is needed to keep up their grade point average and ensure the student and their family understand what make up work is due 	<p>and students in tier three to inform tier one and two prevention and intervention efforts.</p>
<p>C. Recognize Good & Improved Attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Create friendly competition among classrooms offering raffles, parties and public recognition for good and improved attendance » Celebrate individual progress through weekly, monthly and periodic recognition using bulletin boards, certificates, verbal and written acknowledgement) » Recognize students and parents at special assemblies 	<p>Establish specific individual goals and provide recognition as they are met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Work with students and families to set attendance goals and time frames » Engage students in tracking their own attendance daily » Recognize good and improved attendance weekly » Develop strategies with students based on age, interest and other factors 	<p>Incorporate appropriate positive reinforcements into plans for supporting the student's improved attendance.</p>
<p>D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Place calls home each day that a student is absent » Include attendance on report cards and in report card conferences » Integrate information about chronic absence into parent programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Assign student an attendance buddy » Recruit students for engaging afterschool activities. Provide morning check-ins for students » Schedule Parent/School Staff Conference to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure continued positive and regular contact with the family » Check in on agreements at appropriate intervals » Follow through on commitments of support to the family

	<p>and communications throughout the year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Host a transition meeting (i.e. incoming kindergartners and families new to the school) with incoming families to help them learn about their child’s new school, get to know their teachers, and to set expectations about attendance including clearly communicating how absences can add up and impede learning, along with helping families to understand all of the learning that happens in the early grades 	<p>discuss absences (Principal, Vice Principal, Teacher, Guidance Counselor, etc.)</p> <p>Assess student and family needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Refer families to appropriate services e.g. social services, human resources, housing, and health services » Arrange transportation to and from school with other families or staff » Makes home visits and connect families with needed resources » Work with students and families to develop strategies for improved attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » When the student misses school ensure assigned personnel is following up on each absence
<p>E. Remove barriers to attendance</p>	<p>Invite parents and community members to help address the barriers that keep children from attending school. Strategies could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A school breakfast program and/or food pantry to address hunger and nutrition needs » A safe walk to school program to address community safety » Health interventions such as flu shots, dental checkups and asthma management plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identify barriers to attendance, such as health, transportation or housing » Involve public agencies and community partners and resources as needed to address barriers to attendance » Involve the school nurse with follow-up on medical related absences » Provide families with information on community resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Implement agreed upon family intervention plan. Monitor for progress » Connect students with chronic physical and mental health issues to medical providers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A clothing drive for winter coats or school uniform exchange » Adoption of a school climate initiative aimed at improving approaches to student discipline and creating a more welcoming environment 	<p>that can help overcome barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Connect families with school-based resources that can support good attendance 	
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GUIDELINES TO TRUANCY COURT REFERRALS

After a student has accumulated 10 or more absences, the Compulsory Education Law mandates that the matter is referred to court. The Office of Student Services will initiate court referrals once the school-based Attendance Team implements attendance improvement strategies and documents intervention efforts via PowerSchool. The following action steps are required prior to a court referral being completed by the district's truancy court representative:

1. Conduct an intervention meeting with family and develop an Attendance Improvement Plan that is reviewed bi-weekly to note any progress.
2. All intervention warning notices and actions should be documented and verifiable in PowerSchool.

IMPORTANT STEPS TO FOLLOW BEFORE REQUESTING A COURT REFERRAL:

- ✚ Follow the Attendance Team intervention strategies and document steps outlined in this manual.
- ✚ Note in documentation any referrals made to internal and external community partners.
- ✚ Ensure that the school-based Attendance Team has conducted thorough research on all student absences that are marked 'unexcused'.
- ✚ Office of Student Services (Managers of School Support) have received a copy of Attendance Improvement Plan.

Absences that include reasons of hardship, suspensions, parent conferences, and/or transportation should be addressed during the parent intervention meetings when developing the Attendance Improvement Plan and should NOT be referred to court.

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN



STUDENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION		
DATE OF PLAN CREATION:		
LAST NAME:		FIRST NAME:
DOB:	GRADE:	PHONE #:
EXCUSED ABSENCES:	TARDIES:	UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:
ADDRESS:		
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME(S):		
ADDRESS (IF DIFFERENT):		
EMAIL:	PHONE #:	

SCHOOL CONCERNS/REASONS FOR ABSENCES		
<input type="checkbox"/> LATE TO SCHOOL	<input type="checkbox"/> SKIPPING SCHOOL	<input type="checkbox"/> PEER CONFLICTS
<input type="checkbox"/> LATE TO CLASS	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	<input type="checkbox"/> NEEDED AT HOME
<input type="checkbox"/> MISSING BUS	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR GRADES	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDICAL CONCERNS
<input type="checkbox"/> SAFETY CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> HOMELESS	<input type="checkbox"/> BULLYING CONCERNS
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCESSIVE SUSPENSIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> BEHAVIOR CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> STAFF CONFLICTS
<input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL ANXIETIES	<input type="checkbox"/> TIRED/OVERSLEEP	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK HOURS
<input type="checkbox"/> OUTSIDE OF CATCHMENT AREA	<input type="checkbox"/> MULTIPLE SIBLINGS IN MULTIPLE SCHOOLS	
PARENT CONCERNS:		
OTHER NOTABLE CONCERNS:		

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) TO RESOLVE THE CAUSES OF ABSENCES:

- The parent will make sure that the student is up and prepared for school each day.
- The parent will make sure the student has transportation to and from school each day.
- The parent will send written and/or medical excuses when student is absent for a valid reason.
- The parent will *immediately* notify the school by phone or note when the student is absent.
- Other: _____

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE STUDENT TO RESOLVE THE CAUSES ABSENCES:

- The student will take the necessary steps to ensure that he/she is awake and is ready for school.
- The student will attend school daily and be absent only for lawful reasons.
- Obey all school rules, dress codes and behave appropriately at school.
- Complete and return all homework as directed including make-up work.
- Other: _____

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY ATTENDANCE TEAM MEMBERS:

- Develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.
- Monitor student's attendance at school.
- Review and update the Attendance Improvement Plan as appropriate or as needed.
- Provide family with community resources as necessary.
- Other: _____

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT ABSENCES CONTINUE:

- School officials will review the Attendance Improvement Plan.
- School officials will contact the parent by letter or phone to notify them of the continued absences.
- School officials will refer the student to the Office of School Support for continued non-attendance and Trenton Board of Education Mediation.
- Student will be referred to the appropriate outside agency (i.e. Family Court, Child Protective Services) for intervention.
- Other: _____

REFERRALS:

- Student Counseling
- Student Evaluation
- Parent Connect
- Before/After School Care
- Homeless Liaison

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS:
1. ATTEND SCHOOL REGULARLY.
2. ARRIVE TO SCHOOL ON TIME.
3. PROVIDE APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION FOR ABSENCES.
4. MAINTAIN OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS AND CLASSROOM TEACHERS.

PARENT/GUARDIAN(S) AND STUDENTS SHALL:
1. GET STUDENT TO SCHOOL ON TIME EVERY DAY.
2. PROVIDE SCHOOL WITH MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION FOR ILLNESSES OR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.
3. SCHEDULE MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS AFTER SCHOOL WHEN POSSIBLE.
4. CONTACT THE SCHOOL IN THE MORNING IF STUDENT WILL BE ABSENT FOR ANY REASON.
5. EXPECT AND SUPPORT SCHOOL CONSEQUENCES FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES.

COMMENTS:

EFFECTIVE DATE OF IMPROVEMENT PLAN:					
ATTENDANCE PLAN REVIEW DATES					

I/we agree to participate in the above improvement plan and understand that if I/we fail to abide by its terms, I/we can be referred to municipal court, and/or child protective services for further intervention to improve regular and consistent school attendance. I/we also understand that continued and excessive absences can result in grade retention and exclusion from school activities and athletic programs as per the board attendance policy.

PARENT SIGNATURE:	DATE:
STUDENT SIGNATURE:	DATE:
MANAGER OF SCHOOL SUPPORT SIGNATURE:	DATE:

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE MANAGER OF SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR SIGNATURE.