

The Newark Public Schools

OFFICE OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS
OFFICE OF ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE HANDBOOK

Guide to NPS Attendance Policy and Procedures • Truancy Intervention
Practices & Strategies • School-Based Prevention Techniques
& Recommendations • The Office of Attendance Services



The Newark Public Schools

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A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF ATTENDANCE

School attendance is everyone's concern. NPS is committed to working together with our students, families and community partners to eliminate the obstacles to achieving 100% school attendance. Attendance is recognized as a key factor to a student's education and a prerequisite for student success. Through support and guidance from the Office of College and Career Readiness, Office of Attendance is committed to helping schools achieve their attendance goals!

With operational excellence, The Office of Attendance will offer district schools and programs with support to meet attendance benchmarks by providing helpful resources, professional assistance and practical support.

For specialized assistance after review of the attendance manual, application procedures and suggested attendance strategies, call **(973) 733-7292** to be connected to an attendance team member!



Christopher Cerf
Commissioner of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NJ Department of Education Attendance Policy 1

Suggested Attendance Prevention Strategies..... 2

School-Based Attendance Functions 3

School-Based Attendance Interventions and PowerSchool Steps 4

Student Support Team Intervention Strategies 6

Guidelines to Submit a School Attendance Court Case 7

Home Visit Guidelines..... 8

Special Services Unit –Overview 9

Special Services Unit—Educational Stability Support..... 10

Special Services Unit—Transportation Requests 11

Working Papers 12

Frequently Asked Questions 13

NJ Department of Education Attendance Policy

The State of New Jersey requires all children between the ages of 6-16 to attend school. The Newark Public Schools has established a universal, multi-discipline approach to address student absenteeism that involves the student, parent, school personnel, and central office partners. The state statute regarding attendance and truancy (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-26) requires:

“regular student attendance “during all the days and hours that the public schools are in session in the district,” and N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27 defines “juvenile delinquent” as “any child...found away from school during school hours.” Provisions, however, are refined and clarified by Department of Education regulation, N.J.A.C. 6A:32-9.3, which states that “a school day shall consist of not less than four hours of actual instruction.” That regulation also provides that “in a school which is in session during both the forenoon and the afternoon, a student shall be present at least one hour during both the forenoon and afternoon in order to be recorded as present for the full day.”

NPS District Policy 5113, entitled **“ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND EXCUSES,”** contains the same language.

NPS Student Support Team Staff Members

Principal/Vice Principal • SST Coordinator • Social Worker • School Counselor/Guidance Counselor • Nurse • Parent Liaison • Teacher • Child Study Team Member (CST) • School Resource Officer • HIB Coordinator

Suggested Attendance Prevention Strategies at a Glance

WHAT YOU CAN DO AT YOUR SCHOOL TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE?

- Plan a Perfect Attendance Pep Rally
- Lunch and breakfast with School Administrator
- Special & uniquely crafted bulletin boards to inform staff, students and our parents of student achievers
- Distinctive Individual and Class Announcements daily and weekly
- Innovative IPod raffle
- Plan Field Days and local field trips!

Proven Examples for Promoting Good Attendance:

When students achieve perfect attendance for a month, they become a STAR (Studious, Thoughtful Accountable and Respectful) student. They earn a gold T-shirt saying “I am a STAR student.” Their picture is displayed on the bulletin in the school lobby.

Principal or Vice Principal can write letters to encourage students to return to school or congratulate those who have started attending more regularly.

Award the class with the best attendance an extra 15 minute recess on Fridays supervised by the principals. The students enjoy the attention from principal

Mentoring has been central to prevent and intervene in instances of chronic absenteeism. Establish a mentoring or coaching program where identified school staff can pair with students to provide encouragement and advisement.

Recognizes good attendance on a weekly, monthly and semester basis. Students who attend for a full week receive popcorn passes. The homeroom class in each grade level with the best attendance each month receives pizza. Students with fewer than two absences can enter end-of-semester drawing for prizes.

Additional Information and resources for the prevention and remediation of attendance problems can be found at www.attendanceworks.com

School-Based Attendance Functions

Meeting attendance goals requires commitment, collaboration, and your school’s tailor-made approach to address student absenteeism. Below are actions steps for members of the school community to track, monitor, prevent and address student absences:

Job Title	Primary Attendance Tasks
Classroom Teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inputs daily attendance in Power Teacher (<i>parents of absentees receive a Black Board Connect call notification</i>) 2. Calls parents when a student is absent—adds reason for absences in Power Teacher
PowerSchool Clerk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enters ‘Tardy’ and other corrections (documented excuses) in Power School daily 2. Mails “Warning Notice” to parents of children missing 3 or more days without teacher confirmation of reason for absence in Power School 3. Solicits updates to contact information from parents via classroom teachers and updates Power School
*Student Support Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal/Vice Principal • Social Worker • Guidance/School Counselor • Nurse • Parent Liaison • Teachers • Child Study Team Member • SST Coordinator • School Resource Officer • HIB Coordinator 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review attendance data weekly to develop and implement targeted interventions for students with unexcused or undocumented and persistent (5-9 days) absences 2. Facilitate Parent Intervention Meetings to develop Pupil Assistance Plans 3. Conduct home visit for non-responsive parents 4. Identify truant and educational neglect cases for elevated action with the Office of Attendance

NPS Attendance Interventions

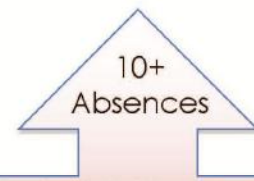
Judicial Hearings are reserved for true cases of chronic truancy and/or educational neglect.



Linking families with needed resources is the primary objective of intervention meetings.



All efforts are geared toward keeping students enrolled and attending school regularly.

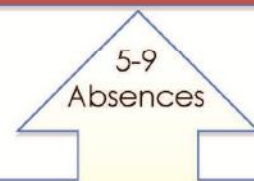


Office of Attendance schedules judicial hearing for student (age 6 -16) with:

- 10+ unexcused absences (excluding hardship)
- Parents failing to respond to student support team intervention

Student age 16+
Office of Attendance:

- Facilitates intervention meeting with parent and student
- If no-show, refers the student to the Reengagement Ctr. Outreach Team
- Office of Attendance Intervention Plan - Note in Power School*

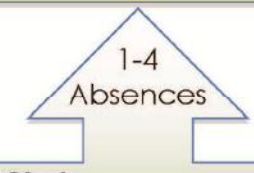


Student Support Team - Parent Intervention Meeting:

- Verbal & written request to parent (x3)
- Develop Pupil Action Plan
- Link parent & student to community resources

If parent fails to show after 3 attempts:

- Home visit and Legal Notice of Violation (x1)
- If home visit is unsuccessful, refer to Office of Attendance for intervention



Teachers and Power School Clerk

Daily attendance & call to parent – Teacher (inputs reason for absence in Power Teacher)

"Tardy" corrections entered daily – Power School Clerk

Warning Notice mailed to parent – Power School Clerk

Weekly data report on absences - Student Support Team (SST)

- Students with patterns of absence receive an Attendance Action Plan

Student Support Team Intervention Strategies

The role of the Student Support Team as it relates to attendance is to serve as the lead on facilitating and coordinating school-based and community resources and to implement intervention tactics to reduce student unexcused absenteeism. To assist the school's Student Support Team in addressing student attendance the following strategies are suggested to address unexcused absences:

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

- Call all available telephone numbers listed in Power School (including emergency contacts)
- Send mailings to the address listed in Power School
- Send email when an email address is available
- Designated member of the Student Support Team will schedule a parent meeting at the school. If the student has an IEP include appropriate member of the Child Study Team.

The school's administrator will implement a system to log all late arrivals (tardy) daily and change any tardies that have been recorded as an absence in Power School.

Implement an organized system to collect any and all documentation that is provided to support an absence, to include but not limited to:

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

For additional ideas and information on interventions, including strategies for high school students, visit www.attendanceworks.com

Guidelines to Submit a School Attendance Court Case

When cumulative absences for student ages 6-16 reaches 10 or more days, the Compulsory Education Law (N.J.S.A. 18A) mandates that the matters be referred to court. The Office of Attendance will support schools in facilitating court referrals once the school's Student Support Team implements attendance improvement interventions and submits documentation of the team's efforts. Prior to contacting the school's assigned court representative, the following actions steps are required to submit a case to School Attendance Court:

1. *Conduct a Student Support Team Intervention Meeting and document all team efforts to address student's unexcused absence*
2. *Submit a copy of the completed Social Case History form (located on Attendance page on the NPS Website)*

IMPORTANT STEPS TO FOLLOW BEFORE SUBMITTING A COURT REFERRAL:

- Follow Student Support Team Intervention Strategies & document steps outlined in this Attendance Manual & NPS Policy 5113
 - Include in your documentation notation of all referrals made to internal and external partners and intervention strategies implemented
 - Ensure nature of absences have been researched to determine that the absences are unexcused.
3. *Submit a copy all documents to address unexcused absences (i.e. Warning Letter, Legal Notice, Intervention Meeting Letter sent to Parent/Guardian Power School Records). *Absences that include reasons of hardship, suspensions, parent conferences and transportation should be addressed during team meetings and should not be referred to court.*

Home Visit Guidelines

When visiting a student's residence to address student absences, the following guiding principles are recommended:

Plan: When attempts to contact a parent/guardian by telephone fail, a letter should be mailed to the home address noted in PowerSchool informing the parent/guardian that you have been trying to contact them. If no response, a home visit should then be conducted with approval of the administrator.

Buddy System: Always conduct home visits with an NPS colleague. Conducting home visits independently are strongly discouraged.

Communicate: Before leaving the school, inform school clerk and one other coworker that you are going on a home visit. Be sure to inform them where you are going and your expected time of return. After you have completed a home visit inform clerk and/or colleague of your whereabouts.

Documentation: All letters and pertinent information delivered to the parent should be completed and inserted in an envelope before leaving location.

Directions: If you are unsure of the exact location of the residence, use MapQuest or similar search engine before your departure.

Emergencies: In the unfortunate event of an emergency occurring while you are off-site, always contact your school's administrator for notification immediately after occurrence.

SAFETY TIPS:

- Be aware of your surroundings
- Make sure your cell phone and keys are accessible
- Always display your identification card or badge and introduce yourself as a Newark Public Schools employee when coming in contact with people
- Treat parents and neighbors courteously, remembering that they are in their home and neighborhood, and that you are the guest
- ***If at any time you feel uncomfortable immediately end the visit***
- ***Remember to always trust your instincts***



District Policies and Procedures regarding travel and reporting incidents can be obtained through the Office of Labor Relations.

Special Services Unit Serving Students who are Homeless

The Office of Attendance Special Services Unit partners with NPS schools' Student Support Teams to aid and provide displaced/homeless students and their families with the services they need.

Who is homeless?

(Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, The term "homeless children and youth"— A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and B. includes — 1. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement; 2. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings... 3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings

Some of the services that the Special Services Unit provides include but are not limited to:

- support families assistance & DCP&P agency by expediting student enrollment in a new school or transferring to a school closer to temporary residence
- provide families transportation assistance to and from school/approved educational program
- assistance with obtaining school uniforms/and or vouchers and other supplies
- refer families and/or students to other internal and external stake holders for additional resources
- Increasing awareness about displaced/homeless students and their rights by educating all students with informational workshops.

All families who are displaced or homeless should be referred to a Student Support Team member at school. SST designated person should contact Special Services Unit at (973) 733-7292 for further assistance after student homelessness is identified. If a parent reports to the school first, a member of the Student Support Team should have the parent/guardian complete the SSU form (on website and P/L Drive and fax form to (973) 733-6676 or email a member of the Special Services Unit.

Links to community resources can be obtained through school's Social Worker or by visiting NPS' website

Special Services Unit

ASSISTING STUDENTS WITH EDUCATIONAL STABILITY

Students in our district who are displaced can continue attending their school of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. Students may also choose to enroll in any public school that students living in the same catchment area are eligible to attend.

DIVISION OF CHILD PROTECTION AND PERMANENCY (DCP&P) SUPPORT

Children who are DCP&P foster care and foster homes placement or other temporary housing by DCP&P are considered homeless or displaced (McKinney-Vento Act). In order to better service the needs of these students entering the Newark Public Schools through DCP&P placement and to better monitor their enrollment/transfer status, the following guidance has been developed in collaboration with DCP&P:

- New school enrollment for students who are in DCP&P custody will begin with verification from the Office of Attendance/Special Services Unit, Room 912 (intake or transfer form is available on the NPS Attendance webpage).
- If the DCP&P worker and child reports directly to the school, the school must contact the Special Services Unit to coordinate next steps for enrollment or transfer
- The Special Services Unit Staff Member will provide the school with the internal intake form for new school enrollment or Transfer Request form for transfers
- Special Services Unit will complete the appropriate field in PowerSchool to indicate child's new residential status

The DCP&P worker must accompany the child to the school on the first day to complete other important documents that are required once the Special Services Unit verifies information.

If the student requires transportation, a member of the Special Services Unit will coordinate transportation with DCP&P and the Office of Transportation and will inform the SST of the outcome.

Assistance for students who are displaced can be expedited by contacting Office of Attendance, Special Services Unit at 973-733-7292.

Special Services Unit

DCP&P Transportation Request Process:

1. DCP&P provides Office of Attendance with Educational Stability Letter confirming student is in foster care
 - Date of removal from home is in the body of the letter
 - Residence at time of removal from home will be listed next to the Student ID
 - NPS school at time of removal is listed at top of letter along with the Principal's name
 - Request to maintain current school in NPS (<10% will request a transfer)
2. Office of Attendance conducts Power School verification of student enrollment and address on date of removal from the home
3. If student is not listed on roster on date indicated Office of Attendance will notify DCP&P case manager
4. Office of Attendance sends individual letter of verification to Office of Transportation requesting bus tickets/card or bus transportation
5. Office of Transportation forwards request for bus transportation to the Essex County Commission
6. Essex County Commission confirms vendor and bus pick-up start date – sends notification to parent/guardian and Office of Transportation
7. Office of Transportation sends confirmation of bus pick-up to Office of Attendance; also provides bus tickets/cards to the Office of Attendance for monthly distribution to families.
8. Office of Attendance will send confirmation of bus transportation to Case Worker and Resource Development Specialist.
9. Office of Attendance logs the names, dates, type of distribution (ticket/card) at the point of dissemination.

Office of Attendance Working Papers

The Office of Attendance processes working papers and theatrical permits for all children age 14-18 who reside in the city of Newark. Working papers are certified at 2 Cedar Street, room 912. Below are helpful tips to consider as you assist your students who have obtained employment.

- Students may obtain blank working papers from school counselor, 2 Cedar St. or by visiting and downloading from www.nj.gov/labor
- Parents or guardians of the students can process working papers throughout the day, from 8:30 am—4:00 pm.
- Students are discouraged from visiting The Office of Attendance while school is in session
- Birth certificate, or unexpired passport is necessary for certification and a Social Security Card
- If the student is offered employment for the first time, a doctor has to stamp and sign the working papers
- Parent's or guardian's signature is required on all working papers
- School Administrator's signature is required if employment will occur during the school year.

For questions regarding employment and child labor laws contact:

**NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Wage and Hour Compliance**

P.O. Box 389
Trenton, NJ 08625-0389

Phone (609) 292-2305
FAX (609) 695-1174
<http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us>

On the Web: www.nj.gov/labor

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What do we do if the address or telephone numbers in Power School are incorrect?

Blank emergency contact forms can be kept in the main office to allow families to provide update information. Also, schools may institute a quarterly address and emergency contact information update to be entered in Power School.

Q. What if the suggested interventions are not effective and a student still has an attendance issue?

The Student Support Services Team should contact the Office of Attendance (733-7292) for additional guidance and support once the interventions that the team has put in place have been completed and documented as outlined in this attendance manual.

Q: What families should be referred to the Special Services Unit?

Any family who is displaced or homeless (families living in shelters, hotels, or placed in foster placement by DCP&P), including families who are sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing for economic reasons or disasters should be referred.

Q. What should be done if a displaced family is unable to provide the required paperwork for registration (such as transfers, immunization records, and proof of address)?

A child who is displaced must be enrolled immediately while verification of status takes place.(NJAC 18A:36-19). Contact The Special Services Unit always if a child or family identifies homeless.

Q. What if a displaced/homeless student does not have a school uniform and supplies?

All students should be allowed to attend all classes/extra curriculum activities and referred to SST or Special Services for assistance.

Q. What are the guidelines for attendance if a student is placed on Home Instructions?

No absences should be coded while the child is on home instruction. The home instruction teacher will record the student's

absences and communicate absences to the school.

Q. What should happen if a student fails to attend school for 10 or more days without notification?

If a student does not officially leave school by requesting a transfer or indicating the reason for absences, it is the school's charge to account for the student within 10 days of the student's first absence. Student Support Teams are to engage in outreach and support the student/family with interventions and resources to remove obstacles to student attendance. If the student's school status is unknown after the 10 day investigation period, and the SST has conducted a home visit, the student must be referred to the Office of Attendance for further intervention, and if needed, court referral.



Cami Anderson
State District Superintendent

