

# Attendance 2019-2020

NEWARK BOARD OF EDUCATION

**100%**  
**ATTENDANCE**

“*Education* is the most  
**POWERFUL** weapon which *you* can use  
to *change* the **WORLD**.”

*-Nelson Mandela*



# Mission & Vision

## Mission

- ▶ The mission of The Office of Attendance is to advance student success and help close equity gaps by reducing chronic absence.

## Vision

- ▶ Better district, policy and practices around attendance.
- ▶ Track chronic absence data beginning in Pre K— but also partner with families and community agencies to intervene as soon as poor attendance becomes a problem for children or particular schools.

# Facts About School Attendance

- ▶ Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Almost 60% of the NPS students who missed 2-4 days in September missed nearly a month of school.
- ▶ Approximately 9,616 NPS students missed nearly a month of school last year.
- ▶ Poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade or be held back.
- ▶ By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.
- ▶ Two absences a month will make a student chronically absent.
- ▶ When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.
- ▶ Attendance improves when schools engage students and parents in positive ways and when schools provide mentors for chronically absent students.

# Exercise: Illustrate The Gap in 3rd Grade Reading

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate how the gap in 3rd grade reading grows as children have or do not have:

1. Access to high quality preschool programs
2. Regular preschool and school attendance
3. Summer learning opportunities

# Truancy Vs. Chronic Absence

## Truancy

- ▶ Counts only unexcused absences
- ▶ Emphasized compliance with school rules
- ▶ Relies on legal & administrative solutions

## Chronic Absence

- ▶ Counts all absences excused, unexcused & suspensions
- ▶ Emphasizes academic impact of missed days
- ▶ Uses community-based, positive strategies

# Intervention System

## Prevention

- ❖ Engaging School Climate
- ❖ Positive relationships with students and families
- ❖ Impact of absences on achievement widely understood
- ❖ Chronic absence data monitored

## Early Intervention

- ❖ Personalized early outreach
- ❖ Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- ❖ Caring mentors

## Specialized Supports

- ❖ Coordinated school and interagency response
- ❖ Legal intervention (last resort)

# Cultivate a School Wide Culture of Attendance

- ▶ All schools should have a welcoming and engaging school environment that emphasizes building relationships with families and stresses the importance of going to class every day.
- ▶ Principals can model this approach and engage staff in consistently sending the message that attendance matters.
- ▶ Principals and school staff are well positioned to help families understand what their children are learning in school and what the children will miss if they are absent.
- ▶ Parents and students may not realize that even excused absences, if they accumulate, can be a problem and lead to falling behind in the classroom. Few families realize that absenteeism is a problem as early as kindergarten and preschool.

# Initiatives

## ▶ **Positive Behavior Supports**

- ▶ Monthly Celebratory Convocations
- ▶ Awards for attendance
- ▶ Trips, breakfast, luncheon incentives for perfect attendance
- ▶ Acknowledgment
  - ▶ Morning Announcements
  - ▶ Display names of students with perfect attendance (monthly)
- ▶ Displays promoting attendance (Data Wall)
  - ▶ Student Generated & Professional Posters
  - ▶ Contests
  - ▶ School & District Wide

# Developing Systems

- ▶ Tracking Daily Average Attendance
- ▶ Ensuring Accuracy
- ▶ Daily Data Cleanup
  - ▶ Distinguish between “cuts” and absences
  - ▶ Late vs absent
- ▶ Weekly Attendance Review (Administrative Team)
- ▶ Coordinate with Attendance Counselor, SST, I&RS Teams
  - ▶ Develop action plans, parent conferences, monitor interventions
- ▶ Establish call protocol
  - ▶ Staff members responsible for a group of students

# Actions to be Taken

## Action Step 1: Generate and act on absenteeism data

- ▶ Prioritize the development of early warning prevention and intervention systems.
- ▶ Identify both the students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school as well as the underlying causes of absenteeism.
- ▶ Increase every student's access to support services to address absenteeism before any student misses so much school that it is nearly impossible to catch up.
- ▶ Explore and enter into partnerships—consistent with applicable Federal and State laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—between school districts and other important public and private organizations, such as public housing authorities and public health agencies, to increase and improve coordinated supports and interventions to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism.

# Actions to be Taken\*

## Action Step 2: Create and deploy positive messages and measures.

- ▶ Implement positive and supportive engagement strategies—like mentoring, counseling, and positive behavioral interventions and supports—to improve students' attendance at, connection to, and success in, school.
- ▶ Refrain from punitive messages and measures—for example, blaming or threatening students and families with punishment—which are often ineffective and can lead to disproportionate suspensions and expulsions

## Action Step 3: Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism.

- ▶ Raise awareness about the causes and effects of and potential solutions to chronic absenteeism, especially among youth and families.

# Actions to be Taken

## Action Step 3: Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism.

- ▶ Prioritize trainings for school staff and affiliated community partners to conduct root cause analyses of absenteeism trends among students.
- ▶ Support the development of effective strategies to eliminate chronic absenteeism and use research and evidence-based tools and programs that work to engage and support student success.

## Action Step 4: Ensure responsibility across sectors.

- ▶ Communicate that chronic absenteeism is a problem that affects the entire community.
- ▶ Work together as a community so that everyone feels responsible for successfully addressing underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.

# Poll

**What is your school's absent rate, last year?**

- A.) 0%
- B.) 5%
- C.) 10%
- D.) 15%
- E.) 20%
- F.) 30%
- G.) I have no idea!

# NPS Lowest Attendance Dates

Lowest Attendance Dates	Avg. Daily Attendance	Possible Reason
06/21/19	45.67%	Last week of school
06/20/19	72.40%	Last week of school
03/04/19	72.59%	Delayed Opening
03/01/19	76.21%	Delayed Opening
06/19/19	77.13%	Last week of school
12/21/19	77.5%	Early Dismissal Xmas Break
06/18/19	79.02%	Last week of school
02/20/19	82.02%	1 pm dismissal

# Attendance by Grade Level

Grade Level	Avg. Daily Attendance
5	93.78
3	93.73
6	93.62
4	93.61
7	93.47
2	93.4
8	93.36
1	92.84
0	92.11
9	90.73
-1	89.63
-2	89.52
10	89.35
11	88.28
12	86.75

# EXERCISE: WASHING THE ELEPHANT

## PRESENT VS. ABSENT

Expected Outcome: Increased understanding of the effects of absenteeism on the student and other students and the school.

# Top 10 Things to Consider When Talking to Parents About Attendance

## 1. Approach the issue of absences out of concern, rather than compliance

✓ Make parents feel supported, rather than guilty and in trouble

## 2. Refer to absences by month, rather than by year.

✓ Point out that just “2 days missed per month” has consequences, instead of “18 days missed per year”

## 3. Use simple, easy-to-understand language

✓ Avoid complicated statistics, hyperboles, or metaphors

## 4. Be realistic about what you are asking parents to do

✓ Avoid implying that parents should send children to school when they're sick

## 5. Frame the discussion around “absences” rather than “attendance”

✓ Talking about “attendance” validates what parents already believe they do; talking about “absence” focuses their attention on what they're missing

# Top 10 Things to Consider When Talking to Parents About Attendance\*

## 6. Describe how elementary school builds a foundation for future success

✓ Help parents understand that learning is sequential—an absence is a missed opportunity to learn something their child will need in order to understand more difficult material later

## 7. Give parents specific reasons why absences matter, rather than making vague statements

✓ Say things like... “You cannot make up for too many absences with homework or take-home assignments” “Too many absences will allow them to fall behind in reading, writing and math” “Too many absences now can actually make them less likely to graduate high school”

## 8. Connect parents to the class curriculum to help them understand what their child may be missing

✓ Say things like... “We are learning to identify numerators and denominators this week. Please make sure your child does not miss school because his/her understanding of this lesson will make him better prepared for next week’s lesson on adding fractions with common denominators”

## Top 10 Things to Consider When Talking to Parents About Attendance\*\*

**9. Encourage parents to do everything they can to ensure their child does not miss school**

**✓✓ Ask for reasons why the child was out and connect them to appropriate resources (e.g. transportation issues, child care, etc.)**

**10. Use text messages to communicate with parents about absences, as one component of ongoing and regular school-to-parent communications.**

**✓✓ The vast majority of parents said that they trust teachers most when it comes to communicating about absences. Since many parents rely on text messages more than any other form of communication (including phone calls and emails), it can be used to help build trust and regular communication between parents and the school**

# Identify Community Partners

Mobilizing the community begins with identifying key stakeholders who want to partner with your school district. We recommend:

Attendance, along with school readiness and summer learning, are central pillars of its comprehensive approach to improving 3rd grade reading proficiency. All the right players might already be involved, or the coalition could consider using attendance as a way to engage additional partners in its work.

Consider reaching out to other existing coalitions. Networks already organized to reform schools, promote health and/or improve communities might offer enthusiastic partnership and leadership around addressing chronic absence.

If you don't have a plan or a coalition in place, compile a list and convene community partners who can help schools improve attendance. Natural partners include:

# Community Partners

- ▶ Mayor or county leader
- ▶ Government agencies, including social services, health, housing and transportation departments
- ▶ PTA or parent advocacy groups
- ▶ Teachers union or leadership
- ▶ United Way and community-based nonprofits
- ▶ Local foundations
- ▶ Chamber of Commerce and business leaders
- ▶ Law enforcement
- ▶ Juvenile judges or prosecutors who deal with truancy cases
- ▶ Faith leaders
- ▶ Afterschool providers
- ▶ Healthcare providers

# Daily Routine

- ▶ September/October - “No Show”
  - ▶ Work with Sales Force clerk, review list of students who have not yet registered.
  - ▶ Monitor the “no shows” and cross reference with absence list.
  - ▶ When “no show” students are located, make necessary changes to attendance data.
- ▶ Monitor students entering the building
- ▶ Man the late door (work with the building principal to establish a late door if one does not already exist)
  - ▶ Document the students arriving late
  - ▶ Change absences to late in real time
  - ▶ Reconcile PowerSchool to accurately record attendance
  - ▶ Send an email to all staff members listing the absent students for the day. Instruct staff to respond if any students on the absence list were seen in the building. Change attendance if necessitated.
  - ▶ Call (along with attendance team members) absent students.

# Attendance Awareness Campaign

- Attendance Awareness Month
- Educate parents about the impacts of absences (Handout #1 & Handout #2)
- Provide staff talking points about attendance (Handout #3)
- Attendance Infographic - share with parents, staff, advisory council (Handout #4)
- Bulletin announcements during Attendance Awareness Month (Handout #5)
- Social media posts promoting attendance (Handout #6) Parent/Guardian reminder emails
- Information at Back-to-School Night Posters on campus promoting attendance



# Universal Preventative Initiatives and Programs

1. Attendance Awareness Campaign
2. Attendance Recognition Program
3. Attendance Information on School Website & Social Media Accounts

# Recognition Strategies

- Classroom competitions -Best or Most Improved attendance for the month gets the “attendance trophy” or reward
- Postcards/Email/Certificates
  - Option #1: For those with 96-100% Attendance
- Monthly/Semester congratulatory contact sent to parents/student with % attendance
  - Option #2: For those with 90-95% Attendance
- Monthly/Semester congratulatory contact sent to parents/student, with # of days noted that the student can miss for the rest of the year to obtain 95% overall attendance for the year



In every community in America, there are young people with incredible drive and talent, and they just don't have the same kinds of chances that somebody like me had. They're just as talented as me, just as smart. They don't get a chance. And because everyone has a part to play in this process, we brought everybody together. We brought business leaders and faith leaders, mayors, philanthropists, educators, entrepreneurs, athletes, musicians, actors—all united around the simple idea of giving all our young people the tools they need to achieve their full potential.

There are consequences to inaction. There are consequences to indifference. And they reverberate far beyond the walls of the projects, or the borders of the barrio, or the roads of the reservation. They sap us of our strength as a nation. It means we're not as good as we could be. And over time, it wears us out. Over time, it weakens our nation as a whole. The good news is, it doesn't have to be this way. We can have the courage to change. We can make a difference. We can remember that these kids are our kids. "For these are all our children," James Baldwin once wrote. "We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become."

Remarks by President Barack Obama at Launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, May 4, 2015, Lehman College, West Bronx, New York