2010 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SUBJECT: Requesting the DOE to convene a working group to develop guidelines to reduce the truancy rate in the public school system.

REFERENCE: SCR 074,SD1

ACTION REQUESTED: Final report including guidelines, timeline for implementation, and data to be collected.

DOE REPORT

Introduction:
Truancy has been defined as one of the warning signs of students headed for potential delinquent activity, social isolation, or educational failure due to dropping out. The lack of commitment to school has been established by several studies as a risk factor for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and school dropout. High school dropouts claim more in government-funded social services expenditures than high school graduates. The average dropout costs more than $200,000 over the course of his or her lifetime.

The Comprehensive Student Support Services Section (CSSSS) of the Department of Education (DOE) was requested to convene a Working Group on Truancy Rate Reduction to develop guidelines regarding truancy that delineate how schools can lower the truancy rate and increase academic success. Where possible, the guidelines were to:

1. Use existing systems such as the student support system, the peer review and quality assurance processes, and the school attendance program;
2. Delineate programs that are presently available, such as positive behavior support; and
3. Initially focus on middle/intermediate and high school levels.

The work group was requested to include representatives of the CSSSS of the DOE, the Office of Youth Services, the Family Court of the Judiciary, the County Police Departments, other related state agencies, the business community, high school and postsecondary students, and parents. The lead agency was to be the CSSSS of the DOE.

Status

The focus of the working group over the past year and a half has been on improving school attendance and engaging students in school as a means of preventing the problem of truancy. Once students become truant, their risk factors increase and the loss of instructional time put them at risk for school failure.
The Truancy Reduction Work Group was convened in June 2008 by the Student Support Section and included representatives from: the Office of Youth Services, Family Court, County Police Departments, Department of Parks and Recreation, Susannah Wesley Community Center, Parents and Children Together. Representatives from the DOE included staff from intermediate and high schools and complex area social workers. The Truancy Reduction Work Group met monthly and completed the draft guidelines on June 15, 2009. An accompanying Improving School Attendance guide with tools to assess, implement, and evaluate the school attendance program is also being developed.

Some members of the Truancy Reduction Work Group continue to meet to plan training sessions for secondary school teams based on the practices outlined in the draft guidelines and accompanying toolkit. Funds were provided through a contract with the Office of Youth Services to conduct two (2) training sessions. The first training session is to introduce best practices for developing a school attendance program to improve school attendance and work collaboratively with the community. A follow-up session is being planned with selected schools to continue work on their plans as well as implement and evaluate the success of their school attendance programs.

### Guideline Implementation Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>* Complete draft guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>* Continue work on accompanying guide with toolkit.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Begin planning November training session to introduce parts of the guidelines to interested school teams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August to November 2009</td>
<td>* Weekly planning sessions for the training session with multiple agencies represented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>* 1st training session: November 5 2009</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Continue planning with committee for follow-up session with select schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>* Submit final report to the 2010 Legislature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>* Second training session to be held to follow up with selected schools on their program plans and implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2010</td>
<td>* Continue to revise toolkit based on schools feedback regarding tools used and practices implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>* Complete Improving School Attendance guide with toolkit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>* Release Improving School Attendance guide with toolkit to all secondary schools.</td>
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Data from existing databases will be collected to determine if the improving school attendance and truancy prevention activities are effective. Indicators of effectiveness may include:
- Increase in the school’s daily attendance rate entered in the electronic Student Information System (eSIS).
- Decrease in the number of truancy related incidents reported in the electronic Comprehensive Student Support System (eCSSS).
- Improvements in the school climate dimensions as indicated by the School Quality Survey.
- Increase in student achievement.

FINDINGS:

Attached are the *Improving School Attendance Guidelines*. The *Improving School Attendance Guide and Toolkit* is projected for release to all secondary schools in July 2010 after select schools test the usefulness of the procedures and tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To improve school attendance and increase academic success, it is being recommended that:

1. The Department of Education support the use of the *Improving School Attendance Guidelines* and ensuing guide and toolkit.
2. The Department of Education continue its broad-based collaboration with community agencies, law enforcement, and the courts as an integral component of school’s truancy reduction efforts.
3. School administrators with their school attendance committee:
   a. review and revise their school attendance program and school attendance policy annually based on school data.
   b. review their school’s Comprehensive Student Support System to ensure that all students receive appropriate and customized supports in a timely manner.
   c. design and implement a school attendance program with a system of delivery that addresses all students.
   d. continuously evaluate the school attendance program to measure effectiveness of the program and student progress.
IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Guidelines for Hawaii Secondary Public Schools

Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support/Student Support Branch
Department of Education · State of Hawaii · November 2009 Draft
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School Attendance

Introduction

Improving school attendance is an integral part of the larger school reform effort, along with a challenging curriculum and having high expectations for academics, behavior, and civic responsibility. There is a vital link between effective educational strategies and student attendance. As part of the "No Child left Behind Act," attendance rate is a key indicator reported at the state level on a school-by-school basis (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The Hawaii Department of Education's Strategic Plan, July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2010, Goal 2: Provide Comprehensive Support For All Students indicates a measure of increasing the percent of schools that meet student performance indicators for learner engagement. Attendance rate is one indicator of a measure of learner engagement.

The compulsory school attendance law provides the authority for public schools in Hawaii to enforce the school attendance law. Departmental rules and regulations, policies and procedures prescribe the manner in which schools must implement the law. Students and parents who are identified to be in non-compliance with the law are subject to legal sanctions established by the Family Court of The Judiciary.

School Attendance, Compulsory

Under 302A-1132, Compulsory School; Attendance, Hawaii Revised Statutes (H.R.S.), all school age children must attend either a public or private school unless exempted. School age children are children who will be at least six (6) years old and who will not be 18 years by January 1, on any school year. This section states that any parent or guardian having the responsibility for the care of the child must ensure that the child attends school unless exempted by law.

Furthermore, 302A-1135 H.R.S. provides that a parent or guardian who does not enforce the child’s regular school attendance may be guilty of a petty misdemeanor. The penalty for a petty misdemeanor is a fine of up to $1,000 (H.R.S 706-640) or jail time up to thirty (30) days (H.R.S. 706-663).

302A-1136, Enforcement, H.R.S., places the responsibility for enforcing compulsory attendance with the Department of Education (DOE). Towards this end, agreements have been developed with all departments within the state regarding truant students. Students who are chronic absentees may be referred to Family Court. Pursuant to H.R.S. 571-11(2), Family Court can place a child under jurisdiction for truancy if the child is not attending school or is not receiving the educational services required by law. Exemption from the compulsory attendance law is permitted only under specified conditions pursuant to 320A-1132 H.R.S., Attendance compulsory; exceptions, H.R.S. and the DOE policy and regulations relating to compulsory attendance exceptions.
Philosophical Base

In consonance with the statutory requirements relating to education, the Hawaii Department of Education is committed to providing all students with educational programs which help them achieve and become contributing and personally successful members of society. Teachers, administrators, and other staff shall make every effort to work with the students and their parents or guardians to optimize available learning as well as educational services and opportunities.

Department of Education (DOE) - Compulsory School Attendance Policy

The Department of Education shall make every effort to ensure that student school attendance is in accordance with the compulsory attendance law. Adopted: 10/70; Reviewed: 3/88; Amended: 11/99

School Attendance Policy

All schools should have an attendance policy which is clearly written and communicated to the students, parents, teachers, and school community (Superintendent's memo, July 12, 2008). Schools must implement attendance procedures aligned with the attendance policies and procedures of the DOE.

Definition of Truancy

- Truancy – means that a student is absent from school without authorization.
- Absent – an authorized absence from school for a scheduled class period or half of the school day.
School Attendance and Truancy

The problem of truancy is not limited to the education system or to any one agency. It is a problem that crosses all lines. We must strengthen our efforts to guarantee that each child entrusted to us is prepared for the future (Viewpoint, 2006).

Truancy is both a symptom and a warning sign; in fact, it is one of the earliest indicators of struggling students and the best predictor of students dropping out of school. Students who miss school cannot learn, and the subsequent disconnection from school affects not only their academic success. Students who miss school also begin to be involved in a wide range of high risk behaviors that lead to choices that are harmful to the youth and to society as well, with such behaviors as alcohol and substance abuse, delinquent behavior and crime, bullying, participation in gangs, suicide, teen pregnancy, mental health issues, and dropping out of school (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N Newsletter, Winter 2006).

Many attendance policies have provisions in which unexcused absences and habitual tardiness can lead to further consequences, such as detention and suspension. Suspending a student from school for skipping class will only exacerbate the problem and such punitive approaches can be counterproductive. Students who are truant would be better served through positive reinforcement and proactive measures (A Legal Memorandum, Summer 2007).

Researchers and experts believe students and families should be held accountable for truancy, but they suggest that schools also examine how school structures, culture, academics, and other factors contribute to attendance problems. Strategies should be personalized to increase student engagement. Strategies should also encourage parent/family involvement and maximize on learning time (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004).

Strategies to improve attendance include: mentoring, tutoring, service learning, alternative schooling, and after-school initiatives. Although they may be implemented as stand alone initiatives, positive outcomes are more likely to result when school districts develop attendance improvement plans that encompass most or all of these strategies (A Legal Memorandum, Miss School and Miss Out: Taking on Truancy, p. 6, Summer 2007).

The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) has identified the following school related factors that contribute to truancy:

- Lack of effective and consistently applied attendance policies.
- Push-out policies, for example, suspension as a punishment for truancy and automatic “Fs” for students with poor attendance.
- Lack of parent involvement.
- Parents/ guardians not informed of absences.
• Unwelcoming atmosphere, for example, an unattractive facility or one with chronic maintenance problems.
• Unsafe environment, for example, a school with ineffective discipline policies where bullying is tolerated.
• Inadequate identification of special education needs, leading some students to feel overwhelmed and frustrated with their ability to succeed (NCSE, 2006).

**Barriers to School Attendance**

The following are some barriers to student attendance cited from the *School Attendance Improvement Handbook*, California Department of Education.

• Associating with the wrong kinds of friends
• Feeling resentment toward authority
• Putting time into a job to earn money for themselves or their families
• Using alcohol or drugs
• Having problems relating to people
• Being a victim of bullying
• Feeling little support or experiencing conflict at home
• Believing the school does not offer interesting, challenging, or rewarding classes or activities
• Falling behind others in math or reading skills and skipping class when not doing well, thereby perpetuating a lack of skills and a tendency to avoid school
• Experiencing personal barriers, such as language problems, racial or cultural conflicts, embarrassment because of a lack of suitable or clean clothing, or teen pregnancy
• Being held back a grade or more
• Being suspended or expelled
• Having transportation problems
• Fearing community violence
Scope of Truancy Problem

Truancy is often the earliest indicator of disengagement from school. It is often associated with students dropping out and becoming involved in juvenile delinquency.

There has been increased attention to the transitions from elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school. Research indicates that school-to-school transition is a critical time for adolescents. These changes include students leaving the small, secluded, nurturing environment of the middle school and entering a larger, less personal and more challenging climate of the high school (Mahoe, 2004).

The Hawaii public high school dropout rate was reported to be about 15% (Hawaii Department of Education, 2006).

- The average grade level for dropping out of school in Hawaii is 10th grade for both males and females.
- In Hawaii, 46% of the total prison population was reported as dropouts. However, this figure excluded inmates who entered the system before the current record system was in place, thus researcher's report the figure is most like to match national data which is about 67% (Tito, 2005).
- A 2003 U.S. Justice Department study reported that two-thirds of inmates are dropouts (Western, Shiraldi and Ziedenberg, 2003).

Furthermore, the Gates Foundation estimates that each high school dropout loses $9,245 annually in salary, compared with a high school graduate. Over a lifetime, a dropout's income would be almost half a million dollars less. A dropout would also be likely to be the first to be let go when economic times were hard, and would be likely to contribute far less to taxes, and will be in need of public assistance (Alliance of Education, 2005).

Possible Predictors of Future Truancy

- Attendance patterns: frequent absences, suspicious excuses from school, frequent tardiness
- Poor classroom performance
- Peer relationships: loner, fights, not chosen for games, shy, not belonging
- Limited participation in extracurricular activities and physical education
- Eating disorders: anorexia, bulimia, obesity
- Sibling performance in school was negative, or sibling is a truant or dropout
- Family environment reveals problems (e.g. overprotected)
- Two (2) or more years behind in reading and in mathematics
- Failure of one (1) or more school years in elementary school
- Friends not school oriented or truants/dropouts
- Behavior problems requiring disciplinary action
- Recent divorce in the home or single-parent home
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse and child or alcoholic family system
- Emotional problems, psychosomatic illnesses, asthma, colitis, ulcers, eczema, enuresis, encopresis; behavior disorder or learning disorders
- Absent without parental consent; lack of parent supervision before and after school
- Recent death in the home or terminally ill parent
- Abused or neglected spouse or child
- Disconnected or no phone service during the school year
- Moved four (4) or more times during elementary school period
- Twenty or more absences in kindergarten or first grade
- Separation issues related to the parent and/or child
- Frequent change of schools

# Critical Components of Truancy Prevention

The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) cites the following as critical components of truancy prevention efforts (NCSE, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Attendance Policy  
Schools must have a clear and effective attendance policy and aligned with the: State Compulsory School Attendance Laws, Department Policy, and School Attendance Procedures. | Schools must have a clear and effective attendance policy which is communicated to students, teachers, parents, and the school community.  
- The policy should align with the State Compulsory School Attendance law, Department of Education School Attendance Policy and Procedures. It must include:  
  - consistent tracking of student attendance; monitoring the attendance of students with unauthorized absences; a process of informing and involving parents; and offering of interventions to reduce absenteeism and improve attendance. |
| Process  
The Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS) Process is used in Hawaii to determine appropriate programs, services, and supports | |
| Involvement of Parents/Guardians, Families  
Research consistently finds that engagement of parents and families have a positive effect on the student’s achievement and performance in school. | Involve parents/guardians so they are accountable for their child’s attendance to school. They need to be involved immediately to address the problem and to seek necessary assistance.  
- Parents need to work collaboratively with the school to improve their child’s attendance.  
- Families should be advised to seek the assistance from the appropriate community agencies when needed. |
| Context of a Safe and Supportive Environment  
A safe and supportive environment provides daily experiences that enhance trust, positive social attitudes, and effective interpersonal skills. Provides extended learning opportunities to support student learning. Implements programs which support attendance, academics, and personal development. | Schools can provide a safe and supportive environment through the following:  
- Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and families.  
- Counseling and guidance activities that address behavior, social, and personal development.  
“Extended Learning Opportunities” may include programs such as:  
- “Breakfast Club” for students with attendance problems to improve their attendance, and develop positive attitudes and appropriate behaviors.  
- After school programs and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because they fill the “gap time” with constructive and |
| Involvement of Community Agencies | Involvement of community agencies to provide support to the students, parents and families. Community agencies may provide programs to assist the students and their families to deal with their problems.  
- The needs of the students and families may go beyond what is provided by the school system therefore assistance from other agencies should be sought. |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use of Incentives and Sanctions. | Schools should implement incentive programs and sanctions.  
- Develop incentives to reinforce regular attendance to school (e.g. certificate for regular attendance; tokens or coupons to redeem for school supplies, school sponsored activities, etc).  
- Develop school level sanctions for unauthorized absences (e.g. detention and in-school suspension programs). |
| School Interventions            | School level interventions may include:  
- Alternative programs that provide at-risk students and potential dropouts a variety of options to meet the standards and the high school graduation requirements. The programs address the student's behavioral, social, and emotional needs.  
- Amended student class schedule.  
- School level counseling.  
- Period by period monitoring of attendance. |
| Broad-based collaboration and community-based planning. Specialized Programs | Broad-based collaboration involves:  
- Other agencies and specialized programs (e.g. for substance abuse treatment; personal counseling and therapy).  
- The local police department. Students who are truant are returned to their school by the police and the school imposes school level sanctions.  
- The Court System. Schools file a petition for truancy after exhausting all other interventions. |
| Involvement of Law Enforcement   | |
| Involvement of the Court System  | |
Steps for Implementing a School Level Attendance Program

1. Planning Your School Attendance Program
Planning your School Attendance Program begins with the commitment from a school team with the leadership of an administrator. A school team should consist of a school administrator, school counselor, other school staff, parents, and community members.

A. Getting Organized
- Create or use a similar existing committee to oversee the school's attendance program.
- Construct a timeline to develop and implement your School Attendance Program Action Plan.
- Gather documents to compile your own School Attendance Program manual as you go through the stages of implementation.

B. Assess your current program in comparison to the National Center for School Engagement's “Critical Components of Truancy Prevention.”
- Use the School Attendance Program Audit to identify components in place and components that need to be developed.

2. Building Your Foundation

A. Review Your School Attendance Policy
1) Review your school’s attendance policy to ensure that it:
   - is in alignment with the compulsory school attendance laws and departmental policies and procedures,
   - is written and clearly communicated to students, teachers, parents, and the school community,
   - is developed by various stakeholders and reviewed annually,
   - is clearly defined and distinguishes between an “absence” and a “truancy.”
   - provides procedures to address student sick days, vacations, and extra-curricular activities (school and non-school),
   - provides procedures to submit doctor’s notes or appropriate documents to justify authorized absences, and
   - provides procedures to contact parents/guardians when unauthorized, unjustified absences or non-attendance occurs.

2) Recording of daily attendance data should be consistent and accurate.
   The collection of data is vital to decision making regarding the development, implementation, and sustainability of the school's attendance program. The school must:
   - adhere to the procedures established for Electronic Student Information System (eSIS) to record attendance,
   - take daily attendance that is accurate and consistent as it is vital to improving a student’s attendance, and
   - record attendance period by period for secondary schools.
B. Review your School’s Comprehensive Student Support System
The Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS) is the DOE’s construct for ensuring that all students receive appropriate and customized supports in a timely manner. Several supports and services include:

1) School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)
   Establishing and maintaining school cultures that are healthy, safe, and respectful are essential to the well-being of all students. A safe and nurturing school environment is foundational to promoting social and academic success. Indicators of active implementation include:
   - Having a school leadership cadre that routinely examines and analyzes student behavior data to identify “hot spots.”
   - Teaching and acknowledging school-wide behavioral expectations and core ethical values.
   - Integration of character education into existing school curricula.
   - Availability of a continuum of behavioral supports to address low intensity, at-risk, and high intensity behavioral problems.

2) Parent Involvement and Participation
   Parents and families are full participants in the educational process for their children. Parents are integral partners and share in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of educational services for their child through regular communication and participation with their schools.
   - Parents/guardians should be informed immediately of unauthorized absences as part of the school’s attendance policy and procedures.
   - Parents can provide vital information to identify and address root causes of truancy.

3) Counseling Support
   Counseling and guidance activities are provided to improve student behavior and to get to the root cause of the truancy problem.

4) Teaching Staff Support
   All staff needs to be actively involved in engaging the learner and providing supports to improve student attendance.

C. Involve the Community as Partners
Members of the community are an integral part of the support system for students and their families in the school attendance program. Community partners may include:
- Community agencies and organizations such as Department of Health, Department of Human Services, City and County Parks and Recreation, Susannah Wesley Community Center, Boys and Girls Club, Parents and Children Together (PACT), etc.
- Local Community Businesses.
- Law Enforcement.
A collaborative relationship with the local police department can be established to clarify the function and responsibilities when dealing with students who are caught for "truancy" off-campus.

- Family Court
  Truancy petitions filed with Family Court should be considered after all school level interventions have been exhausted.

3. Designing the System of Delivery
   After reviewing your school attendance policy, CSSS, and involvement of the community, the school attendance committee must develop an action plan that:

   A. Identifies programs and practices that support your student attendance needs which may include:

      1) School Level Incentives and Sanctions
         Provide incentives for students with regular attendance to school and implement school sanctions for students who are truant.
         - Incentive examples:
           - Tokens earned for regular attendance.
           - Certificates of achievement for regular attendance.
         - Sanction examples:
           - Detention or in-schools suspension integrated with counseling and guidance activities.
           - Note: Out of school suspension is NOT effective for truants.

      2) School Initiated Proactive Measures
         Develop proactive measures to improve attendance and support student achievement. For example:
         - Breakfast club: Students identified as truants attend a "breakfast club" where their daily attendance can be monitored and necessary supports can be provided.
         - Extended Learning Opportunities: Before and after school activities, tutorials for academic areas, non-academic high interest activities to engage students in school.
         - Saturday School Attendance Program (SSAP): Developed and implemented as a school level initiative, students attend school on Saturdays to improve their academics.

   B. Determines data that will be collected when implementing the program.

   C. Identifies who will do what and when.

   D. Establishes the budget and resources that are needed to implement the program.
4. **Implementing the Program**
   In this phase, the school attendance program is put into operation.

   **A. Communicating the School Attendance Program**
   - Develop a brochure that is shared with students, teachers, parents, and the school community.
   - Present the program to the school staff site. School staff should include security attendants and others that work with and know the students.

   **B. Working in the Program**
   - Develop a planning calendar if the decided on program requires a master calendar.

5. **Program Accountability and Evaluation**
   A continuous process to measure the effectiveness of the school attendance program is essential.

   **A. Monitor program results**
   1) Develop evaluation benchmarks or indicators to establish the degree to which the program is progressing toward the ultimate goal. For example, Innovation Configuration Maps may provide the school attendance committee with a "blueprint" that tracks the evolvement toward the ideal goal.
   2) Revisit your "School Attendance Program Audit" to determine areas of strength and areas that need to be developed or revised.

   **B. Monitor students' progress**
   1) Assess the impact of the school attendance program. Indicators of effectiveness may include:
      - Increase in the school's attendance rate entered in the electronic Student Information System (eSIS).
      - Decrease in the number of truancy related incidents as reported in the electronic Comprehensive Student Support System (eCSSS).
      - Decrease in Chapter 19 disciplinary referrals related to attendance and truancy.
      - Improvements in school climate dimensions as indicated by the School Quality Survey.
      - Increase in student achievement.
   2) Prepare and share the results with school staff, parents and the community.
Steps for Implementing a School Level Attendance Program

CHECKLIST

STEP 1: Planning Your School Attendance Program

☐ Create or use a similar existing committee to oversee the school's attendance program.
☐ Construct a timeline to develop and implement your School Attendance Program Action Plan.
☐ Create your School Attendance Program manual as you gather documents and go through the stages of planning and implementation.
☐ Assess your current program in comparison to the National Center for School Engagement's "Critical Components of Truancy Prevention."

STEP 2: Building Your Foundation

☐ Review your School Attendance Policy and develop a plan to ensure that the essential components are in place.
☐ Review your school’s Comprehensive Student Support System to develop a plan to ensure that a continuum of supports and services are available for all students.
☐ Involve community partners as part of your school attendance program committee.

STEP 3: Designing the System of Delivery

☐ Identify programs and practices that support your student attendance needs.
☐ Determine data that will be collected when implementing the program.
☐ Identify who will do what and when.
☐ Establish the budget and resources that are needed to implement the program.
STEP 4: Implementing the Program

- Communicate the School Attendance Program to stakeholders.
- Develop necessary calendars and schedules as needed by the selected programs and services.

STEP 5: Program Accountability and Evaluation

- Monitor program results using evaluation benchmarks or indicators.
  Revise the School Attendance Action Plan as needed to ensure continuous improvement.
- Monitor students' progress.
- Prepare and share results with stakeholders.
Existing Systems of Support

A. Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS) and Supports For Attendance

The Comprehensive Student Support System is Hawaii Department of Education’s construct for ensuring a continuum of the supports and services that provide the academic, social, emotional, and physical environments to assist the student to learn and meet the educational standards. The major component of the CSSS is to provide all students with a variety of resources and services to improve the learning, within and beyond the classroom instruction.

An array of student support services ensures that the supports provided and their delivery, correspond to the severity, complexity, and frequency of each student’s need. The array of services is identified through five levels of student support. This support represents a community of caring and supportive relationships among students, teachers, families, and agencies which occur at all levels, ensuring timely and appropriate services for all students (CSSS Operations Manual, 2003).

The student is referred to the Support Team (ST) to identify the root cause of the truancy and to determine the appropriate supports and services needed to assist the student and parents. All programs and services provided are documented in eCSSS.
### B. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS):

A pre-requisite for establishing an effective school attendance program is to determine the extent to which school-wide positive behavior and intervention supports structures and processes are in place. School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success. SWPBIS is not a packaged curriculum, but an approach that defines core elements that can be achieved through a variety of strategies. The core elements at each of the three (3) tiers in the prevention model are defined below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Prevention Tier</th>
<th>Core Elements</th>
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| Primary         | - Behavioral expectations defined  
                  - Behavioral expectations taught  
                  - Continuum of consequences (i.e., rewards, positive reinforcers) for appropriate behavior  
                  - Continuum of consequences for problem behavior (sanctions)  
                  - Continuous active supervision or monitoring across all school settings  
                  - Continuous monitoring, collection, and use of data for decision-making |
| Secondary       | - Early universal screening (CSSS)  
                  - Continuous progress monitoring for students with at risk behavior  
                  - System for increasing structure and predictability  
                  - System for increasing contingent adult feedback  
                  - System for linking academic and behavioral performance  
                  - System for increasing home/school communication  
                  - Collection and use of data for formative decision-making |
| Tertiary        | - Functional behavioral assessment (CSSS)  
                  - Team-based comprehensive assessment and intervention  
                  - Linking of academic and behavior supports  
                  - Individualized intervention based on assessment information focusing on (a) prevention of problem contexts; (b) instruction on functionally equivalent skills, and instruction on desired performance skills; (c) strategies for placing problem behavior on extinction; (d) strategies for enhancing contingent reward of desired behavior; and (e) use of negative or safety consequences if needed  
                  - Establishment of local behavioral expertise  
                  - Collection and use of data for decision-making |
Other Strategies to Improve Attendance and Reduce Truancy

This section cites other strategies which may be utilized to improve attendance and reduce truancy.

1. Strategies to Improve School Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten Things Schools Can Do to Improve School Climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make students and parents feel welcome. Greet them and get to know their names. Create a welcoming school environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create an environment that makes students feel successful in something no matter how small it may seem. Provide awards for attendance, good deeds, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When a student is absent, immediately talk with the parent or guardian. Make a personal phone call to parents in the evening or at work. Do not leave messages on the answering machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When a student is absent, immediately talk with the student about why he or she is not at school. Let students know we are aware of their absences and that we care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Forge a relationship with local businesses where youth may congregate when truant. Encourage local businesses to help keep students in school. Create a poster for local businesses that states, “We will support youth in school and will not serve anyone under 18 years of age during school hours.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Forge a relationship with local law enforcement and make them your allies in communicating to the community, families, and students that school is the place to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Don’t provide the temptation for students to be truant (e.g. close the campus during breaks in the day so they cannot leave campus without a legitimate reason).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Empower and expect classroom teachers to take action when they think a student is truant. Ask teachers to make calls and contact the absent student or family in the afternoon or evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Reward and recognize good attendance, not just perfect attendance. Reward individuals, classes, and the school for improved attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Make the school a place for students to feel safe and respected. Adopt a character building education program for improved attendance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Strategies to Improve Parent and Community Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assess parents/families' needs and interests. Do other agencies and organizations need to be sought for assistance in addition to school level assistance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Set clear and measurable objectives based on parent/guardian and community input to help foster a sense of cooperation and communication among families, communities, and schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hire and train a parent/family liaison to directly contact parents/guardians and coordinate family activities. The liaison should be bilingual as needed and sensitive to the needs of the family, community, including the non-English speaking community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop multiple outreach mechanisms to inform families, businesses, and the community about family involvement policies and programs, through newsletters, video tapes, and local newspapers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognize the importance of a community's historic, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural resources in generating family involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use creative forms of communication between educators, school and families that are personal, goal-oriented, and make optimal use of communication technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mobilize parents/families as volunteers in the school assisting with the instructional tasks, meal service, and administrative office functions. Family members might be invited as guest speakers and volunteer tutors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide staff development for teachers, administrators to enable them to work effectively with families and with each other as partners in the educational process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure access to information about nutrition, healthcare, services for individuals with disabilities, and support provided by schools and community agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schedule programs and activities flexibly to reach diverse family groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the family involvement programs and activities on a regular basis.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Collaborative Strategies of Schools with Law Enforcement and the Court

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative Strategies of Schools with Law Enforcement and the Court</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Local Police Department has procedures established to deal with students who are truant and caught “off-campus” during school hours and work collaboratively with the schools. Students are returned to their home school. The school will inform parents of the truancy and implement school sanctions as applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family Court: The school may decide to file a petition to family court on a student who continues to be truant after all school and community alternatives are exhausted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Strategies for the School and Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Community Strategies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Establish expectations for school attendance and responses to non-compliance. Schools must understand and adhere to compulsory attendance laws; exceptions to compulsory attendance laws; administrative rules and policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forge a relationship with local businesses where youth tend to congregate when truant. Encourage the businesses to help keep students in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create a poster for local businesses that states, “We will support youth in school and will not serve anyone under 18 years of age during school hours.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide services to achieve and maintain school attendance. Providing services to achieve and maintain school attendance is an extremely complex and critical function. In providing such services, schools and community agencies must share responsibility for addressing and resolving the underlying causes of school absences. The involvement of community service providers, departments of social services, and other appropriate public and private agencies, including the community family assessment and planning team occurs prior to court involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community agencies must determine, at the local level, specifically how services to achieve and maintain school attendance will be provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At the interagency systems level, respective roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined. A structure for interagency collaboration must be established and procedures and protocols for the referral of students and parents must be developed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case level:

• At the case level, substantial resources must be devoted to case management to ensure that the underlying cause of non-attendance and truancy are adequately assessed; effective interventions with both the youth and parents are identified and mobilized; progress is monitored and interventions are refined in response to the results. Services must be timely and well-documented if legal remedies are to be pursued.


**School Level Truancy Intervention Efforts**

The following are possible interventions for students who have been identified as truant:

• Amendment of the student’s class schedule
• Attendance monitoring log with each period’s teacher’s signature
• Referral to counselor or outside therapeutic services
• Parent(s) accompany student to school for a specified period of time
• In-person contacts and meetings with parents/legal guardians
• Home visits
• Referral to an Alternative Educational Program
• Consider a referral for Special Education or Section 504 services if warranted
Strategies to Foster "Connectedness" to School

1. Strategies to Foster Connectedness to School

Schools should be a place where students feel connected to and safe, instead of one where they dread walking in the front doors. Schools can play a major role in how students feel about attending. When students feel cared for by teachers and others, and feel like they are part of the school, they are less likely to engage in risky behavior, such as using drugs, engaging in violence, or starting sexual activity at an early age. According to Robert Blum, researcher in this area, school connectedness is influenced through:

- Individuals (students and staff)
- Environment (school climate and school bonding)
- The culture of the school (social needs and learning priorities)

(Blum, R.W., McNeely, C.A., Rinehart, P.M., The Untapped Power of Schools to Improve the Health of Teens (2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies For Promoting Student Connectedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The most effective strategies for increasing the likelihood that students will be connected to school include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Implementing high standards and expectations, and providing academic supports to all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Applying fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are collectively agreed upon and fairly enforced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hiring and supporting capable (highly qualified teachers, HIDOE) skilled in content, teaching techniques, and classroom management to meet each learner’s needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fostering high parent/family expectations for school performance and school completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school. (National Center for School Engagement, 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Teacher Strategies That Foster Connections to School for Students

Teacher Strategies That Foster Connections to School for Students

- Help students to get to know each other's strengths as well as your strengths.

- Involve students in planning, problem solving, identifying issues, and assessing the curriculum in the classroom.

- Promote "cooperation over competition." Post everyone's best work. Offer opportunities for the class to work together to help everyone achieve their level of excellence.

- Build a strong relationship with each student.

- Convey attentiveness to students and excitement about learning through nonverbal gestures.

- Involve all students in chores and responsibilities around the classroom.

- Integrate concepts of discipline and respect from classmates through instruction.

- Give students more say in what they will learn.

- Involve students in developing the criteria by which their work will be assessed, and provide guidelines so that they clearly know what is expected of them.

- Use first person plural (we, us, let's) when presenting classroom activities.

Support of Local Businesses

The local businesses in the community may be encouraged to support the school's truancy reduction effort by agreeing to post sign(s) which state: "We support our schools to improve attendance and will not serve anyone under the age of 18 years of age during the school hours."

Example of a sign businesses may use:

"We support our schools to improve attendance and will not serve anyone under the age of 18 years of age during the school hours."
Resources

- National Center for School Engagement (NCSE), 2006.

References

- Blum, R.W., McNeely, C.A., Rinehart, P.M., The Untapped Power of Schools To Improve the Health of Teens, 2002.
- A Legal Memorandum, Miss School and Miss Out: Taking on Truancy, Summer 2007.
- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Pacific Educator, Spring 2004.