

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

July 3, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Truancy Prevention and Special Education Assessments
(05-30-19-02-A-B)

During Board comments, Board members requested the following information:

Question A

Ms. Silvestre requested information regarding the truancy prevention efforts that MCPS is engaging in.

Response

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) engages in a tiered continuum of interventions to promote attendance and prevent truancy. Under Maryland's *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* accountability program, focus has shifted from habitual truancy to chronic absenteeism. School and central services staff members have access to, through Performance Matters, real time data for all students who are chronically absent as of a given date. Chronically absent students are students who are absent for 10 percent or more of the days they are enrolled, regardless of the reason. The tiered attendance continuum begins with primary prevention and extends through intensive truancy intervention.

At Tier I, the primary prevention level, all schools use promotional materials and messaging to promote the benefits of daily, on-time attendance for all students. Teachers, as the first line of interaction with students, directly address students and parents/guardians as soon as attendance begins to become a concern, and involve the school counselor when students do not respond to the teacher-led outreach. Root cause analysis is a critical component of attendance intervention; in order to determine how best to support and provide resources, school staff members and school teams must engage in problem solving to determine why a student is missing school. School counselors assist in this effort by meeting with students and contacting parents/guardians. Attendance then is monitored on a regular basis and updates are provided to the school administrator and Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW), as appropriate. If attendance does not improve, a parent/guardian conference or attendance Educational Management Team meeting is scheduled, moving into the second tier of attendance intervention.

At Tier II, the focused intervention level, school staff members implement and monitor targeted interventions as part of an attendance intervention plan. Parents/guardians are an integral part of the attendance plan development and monitoring and are informed of both the impact of missed instruction and the possible legal ramifications of the student continuing to miss school. To accommodate parents/guardians who may be difficult to reach and/or engage, home visits often are conducted by the PPW and a school staff member. At this level, community agency partners are considered as possible resources for students and families and, when appropriate, referrals are made to those agencies. Students and families who do not respond to the Tier II attendance intervention are referred to Tier III interventions.

At Tier III, the intense interventions level, problem solving becomes more intensive, additional central services staff members become involved, and the discussion begins to focus on the legal issue of truancy. Attendance Matters is a centrally run attendance intervention managed by the Division of Pupil Personnel and Attendance Services (DPPAS), and involves the problem solving and expertise of multiple PPWs and the director of DPPAS. Cases that do not respond to Attendance Matters may be referred to the Interagency Truancy Review Board (TRB), a board consisting of multiple stakeholders in County Government agencies and nonprofits. At the TRB level, attendance interventions continue to be reviewed and monitored, and cases that do not respond at the TRB level may be referred to the State's Attorney's Office, where charges are filed against parents/guardians for violating compulsory attendance laws.

MCPS believes that the most effective way to address attendance concerns is through a case-by-case, collaborative problem-solving approach to determine the root cause of each student's or each family's attendance issues. A one-size-fits-all punitive approach will not address all of our families with students who are chronically absent. Attachment A, *Best Practices to Improve Attendance*, summarizes the tiered approach to intervention and provides examples of the interventions and supports that may be offered, given the reason for the absences.

Question B

Ms. Dixon requested information regarding the number of assessments that Special Education staff perform for students who do not attend MCPS: How many assessments are administered? How much time does it take to complete this task? Can the administration of these assessments for outside students be conducted centrally at Central Office?

Response

According to the 2018 official child count data, MCPS has 254 parentally placed, private and parochial students with active services plans. The Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) indicates the same number of current students.

After a Child Find referral meeting, testing may be recommended to determine eligibility for special education services. Assessments may include psychological, speech, or educational evaluations. The MOIEP data from May 31, 2019, indicate that there have been 119 assessments

recommended to determine initial eligibility (Attachment B). MOIEP data also demonstrate that 99 reevaluation meetings have been conducted, and 37 students have been recommended for additional assessments to determine continued eligibility for special education services (Attachment C).

The Child Find referral process continues during the summer at central services. During this time, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is hired as summer temporary part-time employees from experienced internal candidates. The IEP team consists of an IEP chair, school psychologist, special educator, general educator, and speech language pathologist. The school psychologist attends these meetings as part of the contractual duties assigned to our current 12-month school psychologists during the summer. In summer 2018, 41 Child Find meetings were held at central services.

If we were to continue our current model throughout the year, central services would need additional staffing to take on the responsibilities of Child Find, assessments, and reevaluations. A team permanently assigned to central services duties would need to be hired, including a school psychologist, as these staff members already are assigned to support schools full time during the school year.

Additional support could be hired to offset just the time needed to complete assessments. On average, the time to complete an assessment is approximately seven hours, which includes writing the report. The assessor would have to be appropriately certified to complete the given assessment. It would require at least 3.0 Full-time Equivalent positions, one for each of the three areas in the county.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Maria V. Navarro, chief academic officer, at 240-740-3040.

JRS:MVN:JTB:KEL:sn:jgw

Attachments

Copy to:
Executive Staff
Ms. Webb

Best Practices to Improve Attendance

Division of Pupil Personnel and Attendance Services

TIERED PROCESS

Tier I Primary Prevention

- Teacher conferences w/student, discusses impact of missed instruction
- Teacher contacts parent, notifies counselor
- Counselor meets with student to determine root cause, impact of missed instruction, strategies to improve
- Counselor contacts parent discuss/determine root cause, impact of missed instruction, strategies to improve
- Counselor uses daily attendance report to determine if issue resolved
- Counselor updates administrator, notifies nurse, psychologist, & PPW as needed
- Counselor schedules Parent Conference or Attendance EMT
- School team develops interventions, consult w/ PPW and psychologist as needed

Tier II Focused Intervention

- Counselors/administrators create & monitor Attendance Intervention Plan w/student
- School team implements specific interventions, consult w/ PPW and psychologist as needed
- If school interventions not successful, PPW contacts parents
- Counselor/admin schedules Parent Conference or Attendance EMT
- PPW & other staff conduct home visit as needed
- Refer to outside agencies, resources and supports as needed
- Consider referral to Attendance Matters

Tier III Intense Intervention

- PPW & Admin monitors interventions determined at Attendance Matters meeting
- Consider referral to Truancy Review Board (TRB)
- PPW case manages families referred to TRB
- Incorporate TRB recommendations into intervention plan
- Continue to review, modify, and implement interventions, align w/ TRB recommendations
- For students aged 18+, consider alternatives to high school diploma

Ongoing

- Central Records mails notification home for 3 & 5 unexcused absences, per course.
- Attendance secretary mails monthly attendance letter to parents.
- All communication documented in MyMCPS.

Best Practices to Improve Attendance

Division of Pupil Personnel and Attendance Services

INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

Medical Reasons

- Nurse/Health Room consultation
- Possible 504 Plan/Health Plan
- Schedule considerations/adjustments
- Principal letter requiring doctors' notes to excuse all absences
- Possible hybrid IIS schedule
- Identify staff who will stay in touch with parent regarding medical updates/facilitating school work

Mental Health Issues

- Schedule considerations/adjustments
- Determination if Childfind/504/IEP meeting needed
- Include identified support on IEP if applicable
- Develop FBA/BIP if appropriate
- Release for contact with medical professionals
- Referral for mental health services, including in-school programs
- Complete Bullying report when cited as absence reason
- Consider modifying daily routine to accommodate mental health needs
- Create re-entry plan to support students returning from extended absences

Hardship/Work Related

- Schedule considerations/adjustments
- Explore program options to accommodate personal responsibilities and school requirements (online courses)
- consider G. B. Thomas Saturday school for extra support
- Request documentation of the hardship (this is part of the exemption to compulsory attendance, consult w/ PPW regarding MD Education Code 7-301)

Parent Issue

- Designated staff member who builds relationship with parent and connects parent to appropriate supports if needed
- Recommend parenting skills (Parent Encouragement Program, MCPS Parent Academy)
- Explain attendance policy, impact of 2 days absent
- Stress importance of parent as partner in child's school success
- Referral for family counseling/wrap around services
- Referral for Parent Community Coordinator or Family Navigator to support specific needs

Other

- Chronic absences/tardies may signal residency issues, investigate as needed
- Consider convening another Best Interest Meeting to discuss possible school change
- Family travel
- Special Education (IEP) related issues
- Consider all levels of interventions for students who are frequently tardy

Transportation/Access Issues

- Explore ways to address transportation/access to transportation
- Address safety concerns such as bullying, sexual harassment at or near bus stops or on the bus, including filing bullying reports
- Communicate information about bus routes, times, pickup locations, and back up plan if student misses the bus
- Share childcare options for younger siblings (Montgomery County Child Care subsidy)

Chronic Absenteeism

- Explore root causes and develop strategies to reduce barriers
- Support parents: understand impact of missed instruction, provide notes within timeline, open communication w/school & problem solve to reduce barriers
- Work w/family to develop home schedule that promotes school attendance
- Expand students school & community connections (clubs, sports, SSL volunteer opportunities)
- Connect student with mentor
- Reward improved attendance with incentives
- Attendance Intervention Plan/Contract
- Student attend HomeWork club (w/activity bus) for make up work
- Make up missed work during lunch, after school, or at Saturday School
- Help students draw connections between attendance and future goals

PPPS Initial Recommended Assessments
June 2019

School	Initial Assessments Needed
Arcola ES	3
Ashburton ES	3
Brookhaven ES	1
Burning Tree ES	1
Burnt Mills ES	1
Burtonsville ES	1
Cabin John MS	1
Cannon Road ES	1
Carderock Springs ES	1
Cashell ES	1
Clarksburg ES	1
Clearspring ES	1
Clopper Mill ES	1
Col. E. Brooke Lee MS	3
Cresthaven ES	1
Damascus ES	1
Dr. Charles R. Drew ES	2
Earle B. Wood MS	1
East Silver Spring ES	2
Eastern MS	1
Fairland ES	1
Fallsmead ES	1
Farmland ES	1
Flora M. Singer ES	2
Flower Valley ES	1
Francis Scott Key MS	1
Gaithersburg ES	1
Gaithersburg HS	1
Garrett Park ES	1
Georgian Forest ES	1
Goshen ES	1

School	Initial Assessments Needed
Greencastle ES	2
Greenwood ES	1
Herbert Hoover MS	1
James Hubert Blake HS	1
John H. Poole MS	1
Kemp Mill ES	5
Kensington Parkwood ES	1
Meadow Hall ES	1
Montgomery Knolls ES	1
New Hampshire Estates ES	1
Newport Mill MS	1
North Bethesda MS	1
North Chevy Chase ES	2
Northwood HS	1
Olney ES	1
Pine Crest ES	1
Piney Branch ES	1
Poolesville ES	1
Potomac ES	1
Ritchie Park ES	2
Roberto W. Clemente MS	2
Rock Creek Valley ES	1
Rock View ES	2
Roscoe R Nix ES	2
Rosemary Hills ES	5
Sherwood ES	2
Somerset ES	1
Spark M. Matsunaga ES	1
Springbrook HS	1
Stone Mill ES	1
Takoma Park ES	1

School	Initial Assessments Needed
Thomas W. Pyle MS	1
Thurgood Marshall ES	2
Tilden MS	1
UNKNOWN MONTGOMERY SCHOOL*	15
Viers Mill ES	2
Waters Landing ES	1
Watkins Mill ES	1
Westland MS	2
Whetstone ES	1
William Tyler Page ES	1
Winston Churchill HS	1
Woodlin ES	2
Wyngate ES	1
TOTAL	119

*Represents students who are non MCPS students but attend a private school in MCPS

June 2019

Resident School	No Assessments Recommended	Assessments Recommended	Total Reevaluation Meetings
Arcola ES		1	1
Ashburton ES	2	2	4
Beverly Farms ES	1		1
Briggs Chaney MS		1	1
Burnt Mills ES		1	1
Cashell ES	1	1	2
Clopper Mill ES	1		1
Col. E. Brooke Lee MS		1	1
Cold Spring ES		1	1
Cresthaven ES	2		2
Diamond ES		1	1
Earle B. Wood MS	1		1
Flora M. Singer ES	2		2
Flower Valley ES	1		1
Forest Oak MS	1		1
Francis Scott Key MS	1		1
Garrett Park ES	1		1
Glenallan ES	2	1	3
Goshen ES	1		1
Great Seneca Creek ES	1		1
Greencastle ES	1	1	2
Herbert Hoover MS	1		1
Highland View ES	2		2
James Hubert Blake HS		2	2
Kemp Mill ES	5	1	6
Lake Seneca ES		1	1
Laytonsville ES	1	1	2
Luxmanor ES		1	1
Meadow Hall ES	1		1
Mill Creek Towne ES	1		1
Montgomery Knolls ES	1		1
Montgomery Village MS	1		1
Neelsville MS	1		1
Northwest HS		2	2
Northwood HS		1	1
Oak View ES	1		1
Oakland Terrace ES	1	2	3
Paint Branch HS	1		1
Piney Branch ES		1	1
Richard Montgomery HS	1		1
Ridgeview MS	1	1	2
Ritchie Park ES		1	1
Robert Frost MS	1		1
Roberto W. Clemente MS	1		1

PPPS Reevaluation Meetings and Recommended Assessments
June 2019

Resident School	No Assessments Recommended	Assessments Recommended	Total Reevaluation Meetings
Rock Creek Forest ES	1		1
Rock Creek Valley ES		1	1
Rock View ES	2		2
Rosa M. Parks MS	1		1
Roscoe R Nix ES	1		1
Rosemont ES		1	1
Seneca Valley HS	1	1	2
Sequoyah ES		1	1
Seven Locks ES	1		1
Sherwood ES	1		1
Sherwood HS	1		1
Silver Creek MS		1	1
Spark M. Matsunaga ES	1		1
UNKNOWN MONTGOMERY SCHOOL*	1	2	3
Viers Mill ES	1	1	2
Walt Whitman HS	1		1
Waters Landing ES	1		1
Wheaton HS	1		1
Whetstone ES	1		1
White Oak MS	1		1
William H. Farquhar MS		2	2
Wood Acres ES	1	2	3
Woodlin ES	3		3
Wyngate ES	1		1
Total Reevaluation Meetings	62	37	99

*Represents students that are non MCPS students but attend a private school in MCPS