

# COW Update on Student Attendance

Shalon Monroe, Family and Community Engagement Specialist  
Adelle Wellens, Communications Officer

# Attendance vs Chronic Absenteeism

## ATTENDANCE

- It can be looked at in many ways just as “chronic absenteeism” can be, but viewed as instances of not attending school whether it's excused or unexcused.
- A student is considered consistently attending if they attend more than 90 percent of the time that the student is enrolled during the year.
- When attendance numbers start to fall in different areas, that's when the first steps of attacking the problem are taken.

## CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

- An issue that can become a recurring problem when a student misses school frequently.
- It can be viewed as an indicator of poor individual performance from grades, behavioral and beyond.
- Missing 10 percent or more than 2 days a year can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by third-grade, advancing into middle school and even graduating from high school.

# Attendance Policy Updates

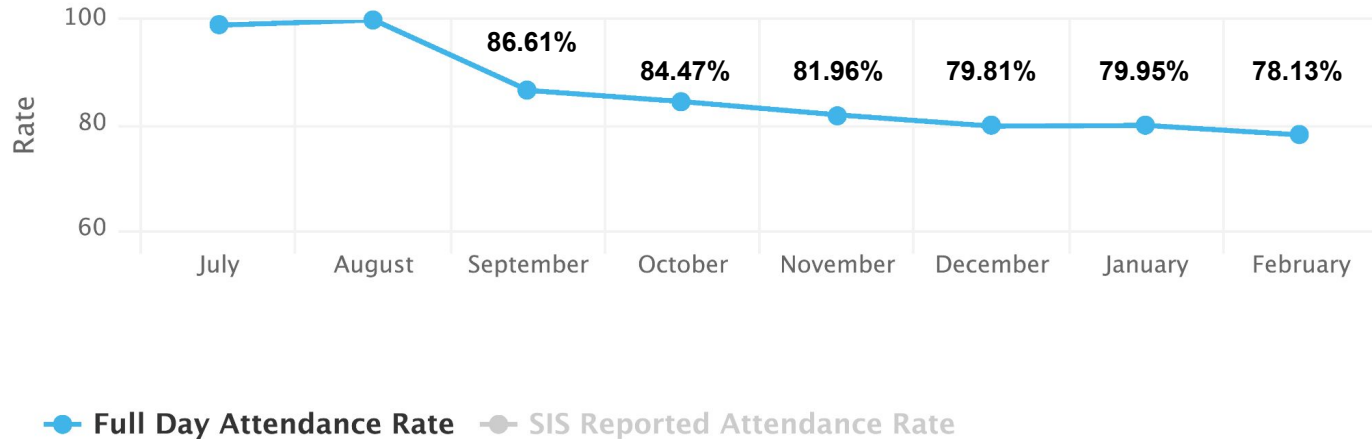
A deep look at the attendance policies has been looked over and reviewed for a while. Since the beginning of the school year, policies have been discussed and reworded in different languages about the standard of attendance throughout the school district.

The new attendance policies went into their second read and was approved by the school board on Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

In the works, we know that there can be confusion when it comes to what an “exempt” and an “absent” are. In the near future there will be training for clerics on how to determine the differences and how to mark them in the system.

# Let's take a look at the Numbers

A student is considered consistently attending if they attend more than 90 percent of time that the student is enrolled during the year.



# Growing through Challenges and Implementation

Variables with connected to attending school/attendance has made several strides as we are halfway through the school year.

- The partnership with the DTA is back and here to stay until next school year with free rides for high school students and staff.
- School sites having their vans have helped to provide rides in the afternoon/evening from participating in extracurricular activities that could have been a challenge.
- ParentSquare communication is growing, and parents are gaining a better understanding of the program's role in connecting with families.

# Student Survey Says.....

Students at both high and middle schools were informed about a “Cause of Absenteeism” survey and encouraged to share their feedback to help identify attendance issues.

There were 1,007 submissions completed. Some of the responses that stood out the most in response to were that students were missing school for serious illnesses, minor illnesses, and doctor appointments.

High school students did show an increase in response for feeling anxious or depressed.

# Progressing as a WHOLE

Attendance is a measurement that can be evaluated from the beginning, half-way, and end of a school year. Each school site and grade level experience attendance concerns at different levels and have different techniques that they have helped with the challenges that they are presented with.

Every Monday at Lakewood Elementary, staff members wear attendance t-shirts to encourage students to come to school and show how they are happy to have them.

Myers-Wilkins' attendance has grown in level. However, they have dealt with a decrease in those numbers due to unseen circumstances with having some attendance record because they have consistently had school bus route canceled. They have had more than three cancellations in the past two months.



# Progressing as a WHOLE

**Elementary Level:** Communication via ParentSquare (calls/texts), phone calls, sending letters and postcards as friendly reminders, and daily check-ins with students.

**Middle Level:** Communication through ParentSquare (calls and texts), sending out letters when students has three or more absences, counselors connecting with students, weekly one-on-one meetings with students and conducting meetings with families when attendance contracts are created and in general.

**High School Level:** Attendance letters are sent home along with follow-up phone calls. Building strong staff-student relationships and having heartfelt conversations about attendance issues, as well as concerns beyond school, is essential.





# Moving and Shaking on the District level

On Monday, February 10th, I got the chance to attend several schools in St. Paul as a part of National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAPPID). On this day, schools hold different events, allowing parents/guardians to see what their children experience in their classrooms/schools. I visited three schools: Eastern Heights Elementary, Highland Park and Central High.

Another step comes in the form of going to different PTAs, Attendance Meetings, CIT Meetings, and ongoing Parent Advisory Meetings.

Community and School Engagement: One thing that has been heard and how the community would like to volunteer with our school sites and students. A [volunteer application](#) was created for individuals to fill out, and I will help to get them paired with school principals and find volunteer opportunities.

Questions?