

## **CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION, FINDINGS AND PURPOSE**

The Holyoke School Committee recognizes the negative impact of absenteeism on student well-being and achievement. Based on national and local research, including student data within the district, The School Committee finds that chronic absenteeism is a contributing factor in the unacceptably low rate of third grade reading proficiency reported annually among Holyoke Public School Students.

As determined by the San Francisco California Unified School District, based on leading research on the subject: “Chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in 1st grade for all children, especially in reading for Latino children. Among poor children, chronic absence in kindergarten predicted lower 5th grade achievement. The long term impact reflects the reality that poor children often lack the resources to make up for time on task and are more likely to face challenges (such as unreliable transportation, unstable housing, or lack of health care) that lead to chronic absence occurring again in subsequent years. Students do not have equal opportunities to learn when they are chronically absent from school”. The Holyoke School Committee agrees with these findings and hereby adopts them.

The purpose of this policy is to promote a significant reduction in the rate of chronic absenteeism among all students enrolled in pre-school, kindergarten, and grades 1, 2 and 3. The scope of this policy does not address the needs of chronically absent students in higher grades, or amend attendance policies relative to students in grade four and above. The limitation of this policy to grades pre-k to 3 is directly related to the district goal of improving third grade reading proficiency. The Holyoke School Committee has existing policies to address truancy caused by unexcused absences. Where any pre-existing policy or any provision in current student manuals related to attendance is in conflict with this policy, to the extent permissible under relevant federal and state statutes and regulation, this policy shall take precedence.

Although this policy is limited to early grades, the Superintendent and the principals of every Holyoke Public School are encouraged to develop and recommend best practices that will reduce chronic absenteeism for students not within the scope of this policy.

### **DEFINITIONS**

Chronic Absence is defined as a student missing 10% or more days of school within a calendar school year including all absences regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused.

Community Partner is defined as State and City Agencies which provide services of any kind to the students and families of the Holyoke Public Schools. Including but not limited to the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Learning; Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Children and Families, Department of Transitional Assistance; Trial Court Juvenile Department Probation, Governor’s Readiness Cabinet; Holyoke Housing Authority, and similar non-governmental agencies providing services to families and children.

## DATA REPORTING

The Superintendent, through the Student Services Office, shall provide a quarterly report of attendance patterns for Metcalf and each elementary school; by school, relevant grade and student population. Each quarterly report shall be promptly received by the School Committee after review and comment by the Superintendent.

## DISTRICT PLAN

The Superintendent and each principal shall develop a plan, which shall be incorporated in the district and each school improvement plan, and to reduce the percentage of students affected by chronic absentee rate to no more than 5% of enrollment in Metcalf and each elementary school by the end of the 2016-17 school year.

## SCHOOL PLANS AND STUDENT ATTENDANCE MONITORING TEAM

The Principals of Metcalf and each elementary school site shall create a Student Attendance Monitoring Team. The team will review data on chronic absences by relevant grade, classroom and, if possible, by neighborhood of residence and perform the initial analysis of barriers to attendance faced by their parents and students. Based upon that analysis of their own attendance data as well as known best practices, each school will develop a numeric target and plan for reducing chronic absence that is incorporated into its school improvement plans; and

The District and, to the extent practicable, Metcalf and each elementary school shall include community partners, defined above, in the Student Attendance Monitoring Team and in the implementation of school and district plans

The use of district communication services, i.e. Connect Ed and Edline, shall be explored as a tool to promote improved attendance.

## SUNSET CLAUSE

This policy shall be reviewed for its impact on chronic absenteeism and student achievement, especially early reading proficiency, following the 2017-2018 school year, and shall expire on August 31, 2018, unless revised and renewed by the Holyoke School Committee prior thereto. This policy may be reviewed, revised or repealed earlier by vote of the School Committee.