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GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM # 18-06

TO: School District Superintendents
School District Area Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents

FROM: Steve Canavero, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction 

SUBJECT: Guidance on Chronic Absenteeism

Introduction

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) met with a broad-based stakeholder group to define absenteeism with a focus on uniform tracking and coding of absenteeism across the state. In order to issue fully informed guidance on these topics, the NDE also consulted numerous research sources, other state department of education practices, federal guidance, the Council for Chief State School Officers, and the US Department of Education.

Why Chronic Absenteeism?

When the Nevada Department of Education wrote its Every Student Succeeds Act Plan there was broad stakeholder agreement on the need to include chronic absenteeism. Our stakeholders desire to see chronic absenteeism was backed up by a significant amount of evidence that positively associates student achievement with physical attendance in school¹. Attendance is a critical component of educational equity, ensuring all students can access the resources and support needed for educational success².

The connection between student attendance and learning is clear: a missed school day is a lost opportunity for students to learn. Research shows that consistent attendance supports student learning

¹ Education Commission of the States. (2017). *Chronic Absenteeism: A key indicator of student success. Policy Analysis, 1 AND*

Georgetown University. (2017). *Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism Under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Future Ed, 5*

² National Forum on Education Statistics. (2018). *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data (NFES 2017-007)*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 3.

and is an important factor in student achievement. Absenteeism is related to lower student achievement³.

Reliable attendance data that is collected in a uniform and consistent manner provides a clear understanding on where students are during the school day in each school, in each district across the state. The result is objective and actionable information from which educators can make improvement plans.

Chronic Absenteeism in the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF)

Chronic absenteeism is a school quality measure that captures the total percentage of students who are absent for 10% or more of their enrolled days. Chronic absenteeism is a relatively small contributor to a school's star rating, currently between 5% and 10% depending on a school's level (Elementary, Middle or High). Schools with absenteeism rates between 0% and 3% earn full points for this measure and schools with rates up to 10% earning half the points possible.

The Definition of Chronic Absenteeism

In order to establish a uniform statewide data point on absenteeism, common attendance definitions and coding are required. These common understandings facilitate uniform reporting for the variety of educational settings that currently exist including virtual schools, community schools, and work-study placements.

The federal definition of chronic absenteeism that State Education Agencies must use in reporting absenteeism is as follows:

A student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g., illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. Students who are absent 10% or more of their enrolled school days are considered chronically absent⁴.

The Nevada State Department of Education defines participating in instruction or instruction-related activities as:

Activities that have been approved by the school, districts, and/or the Nevada Department of Education (e.g. field trips, work-study, and extracurricular activities) and activities that are part of a student's documented educational program. These may include specially designed instruction (SDI) and homebound instruction.⁵

³ London, R.A., Sanchez, M., and Castrechini, S. (2016). The Dynamics of Chronic Absence and Student Achievement. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 24(112).

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (2016). C195 - Chronic Absenteeism File Specifications. Washington DC: ED Facts Submission System.

⁵ Common Education Data Standards. Present Attendance Category. <https://ceds.ed.gov/element/000600>

Examples of “activities” include hospital or homebound instruction by a district designated instructor, as well as off-campus distance education with access to a district designated instructor.⁶ In-school suspension typically falls within this category, but it also includes out-of-school suspension if instructional services are provided.

An example from Nevada would be students who are in the juvenile justice system. In some counties those students are enrolled in an educational program with access to a certified instructor in other counties the student is not provided access to an education program that includes a certified instructor. In this example the student with access to a certified instructor would not be absent while the student without access to the certified instructor would be marked as absent.

Definitions and attendance rules were established through research, consultation with other State Education Agencies, and through a Nevada stakeholder group, the Absent and Absenteeism Committee, representing a diverse group of state constituents including district technical experts, civil rights activists, and Nevada Superintendents. The committee supported a recommendation to align Nevada’s definition of “absent” with the federal definition. The NDE is committed to supporting districts with best practices to effectively address attendance related issues.

Business Rules for Calculating Chronic Absenteeism

Local Education Agencies will count a student absent if they miss 50% or more of the school day. A student will be considered absent when they meet this threshold and are not receiving instruction or instruction-related activities.

Later this spring NDE will begin the process to align NAC 387.185 with the above business rule. Additionally, NDE will work through the Infinite Campus Governing Board to establish the technical requirements and a reasonable timeline to implement this change.

Local Education Agencies will track the amount of missed instruction for each student.

Most districts and schools already track the amount of missed instruction for each student. For those that do not track missed instruction, NDE will work with the school or district to establish the technical requirements and develop a reasonable timeline to implement this business rule.

Virtual schools with charter contracts or operating agreements that allow for alternative attendance tracking methods must comply with their approved attendance tracking protocols.

Local Education Agencies will ensure that attendance tracking in their local student information system conforms to the attendance codes provided in Appendix A of this memorandum.

The NDE will work through the Infinite Campus Governing Board to establish the technical requirements and a reasonable timeline to implement this change.

A student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g., illness, suspension, the need to

⁶ National Forum on Education Statistics. (2018). *Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data (NFES 2017-007)*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; page 13.

care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. Only students who missed 10% of the school days in which they were enrolled in the school are counted in this rate.

The NDE will adopt and apply the above definition of chronic absenteeism when determining this rate for state and federal reporting purposes.

Appendix A of this memorandum provides the list of attendance codes and an indication of their contribution to the calculation of chronic absenteeism. The information in Appendix A represents the codes that are used in tracking attendance in Nevada, the definition of the specific instance of absenteeism, and whether this instance of absenteeism is counted toward a school's absenteeism rate.

Appendix A

State Code	Definition	Counted Toward Chronic Absenteeism
AIA	Alternative Instructional Arrangement - Sp. Ed. only. Must be documented in IEP	No
APP	Attendance Appealed	No
CIR	Circumstance - Family circumstance, family business, pre-arranged, personal business or emergencies	Yes
CIT	Child in Transition	Yes
COE	Check out Early - Parent picks up student early. Student misses less than 50% of the day.	No
DOM	Domestic - In excess of 10 days and or unexcused reason for absence	Yes
EMG	Emergency Closure - School was closed due to an emergency	No
EMI	Exempt Missed Instruction - Student is on campus and missed instruction due to testing, Counselor, Dean, on campus activity.	No
HOM	Homebound: Receiving homebound services from a licensed teacher.	No
ISS	In School Suspension	No
JUV	Juvenile Detention - Short term placement in juvenile detention.	Yes
MDP	Medical - Professional Excuse Provided	Yes
MED	Medical - Parent Provided Excuse	Yes
NCU	Absence greater than 3 days - Parent notification sent	Yes
PC	Phone Call (Student attendance Adult & Distance Learning term)	No
PQ	Physical Contact (Prison Education, Adult & Distance Learning term)	No
RPC	Required Parent Conference	Yes

RWY	Runaway	Yes
SA	School Activity - Sports, Music, Debate, intermural activities, club functions, internships,	No
SDD	Staff Development - Students did not attend class due to staff development	No
SUS	Suspension - Out of School	Yes
SUS2	Suspension – Out of School -NRS required	Yes
SUS3	Suspension - Out of School - instructional services provided	No
T	Tardy Unexcused	No
TE	Tardy Excused	No
TEP	Temporary Educational Program - Student is placed in temporary on/off campus program	No
TRU	Truant - Officer confirmed	Yes
U	Absent Unexcused	Yes
UNV	Unverified - Absence reason unknown	Yes
HDE	Excused medical- requires 72 hrs absent via health code for certain heath related situations	Yes

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