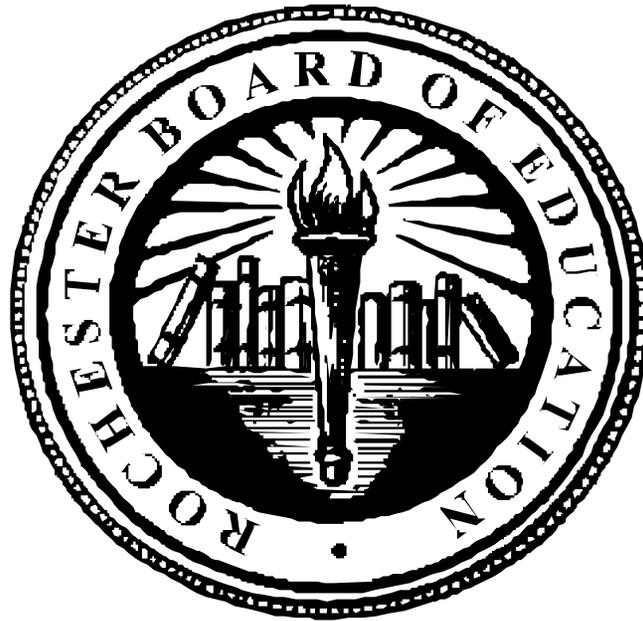


# OFFICE OF AUDITOR GENERAL



School Operations Monroe  
Attendance

**School Operations Monroe  
Attendance  
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**Audit Report**

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## **School Operations Monroe Attendance Executive Summary**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To evaluate the operating control environment and related controls in place to support the Student Attendance Process. Our review will evaluate the accuracy of attendance data, tracking and student monitoring to improve student achievement.

### **BACKGROUND**

Student attendance is maintained in Chancery SMS. A centralized Attendance function exists at Central Office to support administration of attendance practices; however daily attendance recording and monitoring takes place within each school building. Student attendance is a critical factor to ensure that students receive appropriate classroom instruction. As a result, we will evaluate if appropriate practices are effectively implemented and working for student educational success.

### **SCOPE**

Our audit period was the current school year from September 2011 to April 2012. We evaluated operating protocols and procedures in place at Monroe High School to facilitate accurate and timely student attendance. We assessed procedures for recording, monitoring, and communications within the school and to parents and guardians for attendance activities.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sufficient guidance and monitoring procedures were not in place to facilitate appropriate attendance actions at Monroe High School. In addition, there was a new Principal in leadership after several years with one leader, which added to the difficulty. School-based staffing changes between the prior and current year were a significant barrier to an effective process. The prior process included a team based approach to monitoring students. In the current year, it was communicated to staff that they would be individually responsible for all of their students. We noted that the current Principal communicated to building staff their responsibility for attendance on more than one occasion. However, the lack of clarity regarding the detailed process that was expected to be followed and the lack of monitoring procedures, contributed to significant deficiencies in the process. In addition, the school was not producing regular absence notification letters, which commenced during our fieldwork. In the upcoming school year, Monroe High School will experience another Principal transition. It is imperative that clear roles and expectations are communicated to facilitate accurate and timely attendance monitoring.



**School Operations Monroe  
Attendance  
Summary of Recommendations**

Rec#	Recommendations
1	<p><i>Establish formal documented protocols and procedures for Student Attendance at Monroe High school. These procedures should formalize the following, at the beginning of each school year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consistent, timely attendance entry and enforcement for teachers.</i></li> <li>• <i>Standard attendance letter formats and availability.</i></li> <li>• <i>Consolidated filing (and potential mailing) of attendance letters.</i></li> <li>• <i>Parent communication standards including calls, letters, meetings and home visits.</i></li> <li>• <i>Procedures for escalating and collaborating on chronic attendance concerns.</i></li> <li>• <i>System and Administrator reporting for attendance monitoring.</i></li> </ul>
2	<p><i>Develop a comprehensive process that engages appropriate stakeholders timely to support student achievement. The process should identify:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consistent actions that will take place for all students.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identification of cross- functional resources to support students.</i></li> <li>• <i>School Actions required prior to student referral.</i></li> <li>• <i>Maintenance of consolidated information for referral to Central Office.</i></li> <li>• <i>Specific triggers for engaging additional stakeholders.</i></li> <li>• <i>Appropriate monitoring to ensure all students are supported.</i></li> </ul>
3	<p><i>Designate roles and responsibilities to specific individuals for the following attendance related activities: Attendance by period and class type, unsubmitted attendance monitoring, ConnectEd calls and related maintenance, home visits, calls to homes, Intervention Plans, parent engagement, cross-functional communication, compliance monitoring and periodic review.</i></p>
4	<p><i>Assign school personnel responsibility for interacting and formally engaging tardy students and requesting parent excuses. At a minimum, someone should inquire why the student is late and offer a consequence for unexcused tardiness.</i></p>
5	<p><i>Develop a proactive process to obtain correct student information on all bad numbers identified by the ConnectEd system to facilitate parent interaction. Establish building-wide protocols to update student information during the school year.</i></p>



**School Operations Monroe**  
**Attendance**  
**Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans**

**OBSERVATION: #1**

**Attendance Protocols and Procedures**

Formally defined protocols and written procedures or expectations do not exist for Student Attendance at Monroe High School. Protocols do not exist for attendance recording, tracking, communications to home and monitoring. As a result, staff are not performing appropriate attendance activities within the school, and confusion exists amongst the staff regarding responsibilities. We noted that teachers did not send attendance letters because the letter was not provided; counselors did not send letters because they were unsure of teacher activities; and students absent in excess of 20 days did not receive school action. Guidance should be provided through detailed written expectations. These expectations should be formally communicated to staff and monitored to ensure compliance. This would improve consistency of activities and the overall quality of information reported. The lack of uniformity in protocols lends itself to inaccurate tracking, communication and reporting.

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

*Establish formal documented protocols and procedures for Student Attendance at Monroe High school. These procedures should formalize the following, at the beginning of each school year:*

- *Consistent, timely attendance entry and enforcement for teachers.*
- *Standard attendance letter formats and availability.*
- *Consolidated filing (and potential mailing) of attendance letters.*
- *Parent communication standards including calls, letters, meetings and home visits.*
- *Procedures for escalating and collaborating on chronic attendance concerns.*
- *System and Administrator reporting for attendance monitoring.*

**Management Responses:**

We will formally document protocols and procedures for Attendance at Monroe. If Attendance guidance is provided from Central Office, we will ensure the procedures are in alignment. Guidance will also be provided to all schools within the South Zone to ensure an effective Attendance process.

**Responsibility:** Dr. Deasure Matthew, School Chief

**Due Date:** September 1, 2012



**School Operations Monroe**  
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**OBSERVATION: #2**

**Comprehensive Approach**

A comprehensive identification and communication process does not occur at Monroe High School to align teachers, counselors, parents and other relevant stakeholders to remedy student attendance issues. The process for communicating with parents lacks structure and standards. Parents receive communication through phone calls, letters, and meetings. The type and volume of the communication varies by teacher. We were unable to identify adequate school guidance that sets protocols for organizing student intervention plans and interaction with parents. Teachers called student homes based on their judgment. Each person maintains attendance notes for their personal use. Teachers/Counselors were expected to send letters to parents when students missed class from 3-10 days. In many cases letters were not sent at all. Protocols that clearly define responsibility and timing for identifying and coordinating teacher, counselor, parent and strategic community partnership engagement are needed for attendance related concerns.

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

*Develop a comprehensive process that engages appropriate stakeholders timely to support student achievement. The process should identify:*

- *Consistent actions that will take place for all students.*
- *Identification of cross- functional resources to support students.*
- *School Actions required prior to student referral.*
- *Maintenance of consolidated information for referral to Central Office.*
- *Specific triggers for engaging additional stakeholders.*
- *Appropriate monitoring to ensure all students are supported.*

**Management Responses:**

A Comprehensive Attendance Plan will be formally documented and distributed. If Attendance guidance is provided from Central Office, we will ensure the procedures are in alignment. Guidance will also be provided to all schools within the South Zone to ensure a comprehensive attendance process.

**Responsibility:** Dr. Deasure Matthew, School Chief

**Due Date:** September 1, 2012



**School Operations Monroe**  
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**Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans**

**OBSERVATION: #3**

**Defined roles and responsibilities**

Clarification surrounding critical roles that should exist to support accurate student attendance is not in place. Without role clarity, staff inadvertently did not perform critical roles to support student attendance. There was no process to facilitate collaboration or communication amongst school personnel. Without appropriate clarity some functions could be performed by multiple staff while others are not performed at all. There was a lack of clear ownership over the entire process to ensure student success. Generally, individuals performed roles somewhat independent of one another in the attendance process. The functional alignment of the reporting structure did not ensure the goals of the students were achieved or communicated to all stakeholders. Processes should be assigned ownership and handoffs properly outlined. Specifically, responsibility should be assigned for attendance monitoring, engaging community support agencies, parent engagement, changes in enrollment, and legal referrals. It is critical to outline a process and ensure that each role understands and fulfills their responsibility and appropriate cross-functional communication is utilized to understand what actions have taken place on each student's behalf.

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

*Designate roles and responsibilities to specific individuals for the following attendance related activities: Attendance by period and class type, unsubmitted attendance monitoring, ConnectEd calls and related maintenance, home visits, calls to homes, Intervention Plans, parent engagement, cross-functional communication, compliance monitoring and periodic review.*

**Management Responses:**

Roles and responsibilities will be assigned and communicated by the School Principal. The School Principal will also be responsible for ensuring that the roles are effectively performed. The School Chief will monitor to ensure this plan has been implemented.

**Responsibility:** Dr. Deasure Matthew, School Chief

**Due Date:** September 1, 2012



**School Operations Monroe**  
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**Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans**

**OBSERVATION: #4**

**Tardy Arrivals**

Tardy students are expected to sign themselves into school without formal staff interaction. Tardy students enter the attendance office, complete the late form, time stamp the form, leave a copy for the attendance clerk and take one for their teacher. They are not required to explain the reason for their late arrival to school personnel. There is a place on the late form that inquires about the reason the student is tardy; however, due to lack of oversight, enforcement and proper adult interaction, it was not completed on many forms that we reviewed. There is also no process for obtaining a parental absence note or tardy excuse. They are able to utilize the punch clock and leave the attendance room without any conversation or expectation of handing in a written excuse. Students should at least have appropriate adult interaction and be expected to provide a written excuse for being late. Allowing students to clock themselves into the building without any adult interaction implies the tardiness is an acceptable practice. Requiring a parent note or issuing a consequence to the student clearly sends a message that late arrival is unacceptable.

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

*Assign school personnel responsibility for interacting and formally engaging tardy students and requesting parent excuses. At a minimum, someone should inquire why the student is late and offer a consequence for unexcused tardiness.*

**Management Responses:**

We will establish a process to ensure that tardy students are effectively monitored. We will evaluate best practices across the South Zone and implement an effective procedure.

**Responsibility:** Dr. Deasure Matthew, School Chief

**Due Date:** September 1, 2012



**School Operations Monroe**  
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**OBSERVATION: #5**

**Connect Ed Follow Up**

Effective procedures do not exist to correct inaccurate student contact information. An automated voice response system, Connect Ed, is available to schools to dial student homes and communicate school-based communications, including absence calls. When student information in the student management system is incorrect, the ConnectEd calls fail. Connect Ed provides an email which contains the number of completed calls, bad phone numbers or no answers. If someone communicates with the school that the wrong number has been dialed, the attendance clerk will perform follow up. There are no formal procedures for the other bad or incomplete phone numbers. Student contact information needs to be current and procedures should be in place to update records on a regular basis. The emails provided by Connect Ed should be reviewed and bad phone numbers researched. Inaccurate information impedes timely contact with homes. In case of an emergency a contact may not be reached.

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

*Develop a proactive process to obtain correct student information on all bad numbers identified by the ConnectEd system to facilitate parent interaction. Establish building-wide protocols to update student information during the school year.*

**Management Responses:**

We will establish a more comprehensive process to follow up on bad contact information when ConnectEd calls are made. The process will include identification of students with non-working numbers.

**Responsibility:** Dr. Deasure Matthew, School Chief

**Due Date:** September 1, 2012